The Flag Killer

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/59745208.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Jimmy Price/Brian Zeller, Francis Dolarhyde/Reba McClane, Abigail Hobbs/Original Male Character(s)
Characters:	Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham, Francis Dolarhyde, Abigail Hobbs, Alana Bloom, Beverly Katz, Reba McClane, Jimmy Price, Brian Zeller, Mrs. Komeda (Hannibal), Mr. Komeda (Hannibal), Dr. Cordell Doemling, Original Graham-Lecter Child(ren), Original Male Character(s), Miriam Lass, Barney Matthews, Marissa Schurr
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Sex, Anal Sex, Oral Sex, Domestic Fluff, Fluff and Smut, Murder Family, Murder Husbands, Murder, Torture, Blood and Violence, Sexual Slavery, Slavery, Assassination, Assassination Plot(s), Serial Killers, flaying, Canon-Typical Violence, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Will Graham Loves Hannibal Lecter, Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, Alpha/Omega, Alpha Hannibal Lecter, Omega Will Graham, Omega Abigail Hobbs, Adoption, Adopted Children, Psychological Trauma, Psychological Torture, Crimes & Criminals, Hannibal Lecter is a Cannibal, Protective Hannibal Lecter, Top Hannibal Lecter, Bottom Will Graham, Operas
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of The Murder Family
Stats:	Published: 2024-10-14 Completed: 2024-10-28 Words: 31,027 Chapters: 11/11

The Flag Killer

by Black_Lotus

Summary

With Marcus having escaped, tensions are high at the House, yet Hannibal an Will have more important things to focus on. With the House's daily running left in Dolarhyde's capable hands, they instead prioritize raising their beloved children and trying to figure out if the Flag Killer is going to make himself a problem for their family.

LAST PART IN SERIES

Chapter 1

Late and dark was the winter night, the sort of chill hung in the air where every breath misted before one's face and ice had started to form on grass leaving them looking like glittering daggers. The occasional waft of it followed Abigail into the hospital as she made her way through the automatic doors and up to the maternity ward. Will had gone into labor some hours earlier while she'd been in one of her remote classes and Hannibal at work. As expected, Hannibal had dropped everything and taken Will to the hospital while Abigail had finished her class, fed then readied the twins before she'd taken them over to the House with the aid of Dolarhyde – all organized by Hannibal of course. With them under Beverly's care and somewhere safe, she'd made her way to the hospital hoping to meet her little sibling.

Just as with the twins, the newest Lecter had decided they wanted to be born and were rather swift about it. So, by the time Abigail had questioned a midwife as to where her fathers were, said little sibling had already entered the world. For a full year now Abigail had been part of a proper family, she had parents who loved her and siblings that looked up to her, her education was again on track

and she'd even made a friend in Marissa Schurr. Yes, things were going well for the Lecters and Abigail was proud to be one of them.

She knocked on the door before slipping inside to see Will sweaty and tired but holding a baby lovingly in his arms while Hannibal watched over them. His hair had fallen over his forehead making him look years younger, but otherwise Hannibal didn't have a stitch out of place.

"Ah, Abigail, there you are." Hannibal beckoned her closer and snaked an arm around her shoulder once she had reached him. "I trust everything went well with taking the twins to Beverly?"

"Yeah. All good. Things good here? How's Will."

"I'm fine." Will assured with a comforting smile before nodding down to the tiny baby. "As is your brother."

"Brother?" She'd got another little brother? Honestly, none of them had cared what gender the baby turned out to be, but she couldn't help thinking she and Veronique were somewhat outnumbered. "It's a boy?"

Any fly on the wall of that room would have seen only a happy family celebrating the birth of a new member, they'd have no clue about the blood on all of their hands or the darkness that followed them. The Lecters were a family of killers, it was the glue that bound them. Most people were so oblivious when it came to the truth, and it didn't help that Hannibal Lecter was a master manipulator.

"Yes." Will nodded. Abigail moved closer to see the baby while Hannibal rounded the other side of the bed and perched on it. Already they could tell he'd be a copy of Hannibal just as Claude was. "We were debating names before you came in, I think we've finally settled on one though."

Sebastian Lecter, that was her youngest brother's name and one which suited him well. Abigail, Claude, Veronique and Sebastian, the children of a demon and his prince.

~X~

With Sebastian having been born a few days late rather then prematurely like the twins, there hadn't been nearly as long a wait before Will and the baby had been allowed to return home. Hannibal felt terrible for his beloved Bentley though, with three young children he feared for its interior. Maybe he'd invest in a Range Rover, something befitting his wealth and taste but far more practical for carting around small children. He'd been debating getting Will a car for a while now, so maybe Sebastian could be his excuse.

The moment they'd gotten Sebastian settled in his crib at home both his fathers had breathed a sigh of relief, he was officially safe and surrounded by their scents. The last of Hannibal's guest rooms had gone though. Having opted to give the twins their own rooms and Sebastian the nursery and since adopting Abigail, all five bedrooms were spoken for – wasn't like Hannibal had ever really had guests anyway.

"He already looks like you, Hannibal." Said Will as he leaned against his mate drawing him out of his thoughts. "Maybe I should be jealous all our pups look and act more like you than me."

"Nonsense, mylimasis, the twins and Sebastian all have your hair and I'm sure more of you will show itself in them as they grow."

The twins wandered in then clearly curious about their new brother and bored with whatever game Abigail had been occupying them with. Though still so young, Claude never let his sister out of his sight and always held her hand if they went outside. Hannibal had done the same with Mischa when they'd been young; hopefully Claude would protect Veronique where Hannibal had failed their aunt.

Without needing to be asked, they lifted the twins into their arms so they could see Sebastian, but Hannibal clung a little tighter to his daughter than usual. A namesake was all that remained of his beautiful sister.

"He's tiny." Muttered the girl causing Will to laugh.

"He's a baby, Roni, they're always small. You and Claude were tiny, too. He'll get bigger."

Will was the only one who ever called their daughter Roni and, thankfully, it seemed it would stay that way. Hannibal wasn't a fan or shortening such a beautiful name, but he couldn't deny Will anything.

"Will we get big like you, Papa?"

Hannibal smiled at his firstborn son. "You shall indeed."

Nothing could be set in stone regarding which dynamic a child would present as until puberty, but Hannibal saw the signs in Claude well enough and was positive he'd be an alpha. Veronique was slightly harder to judge but he leaned toward omega. Sebastian though, it would be years before even guesses could be made.

Will pulled Hannibal's attention away from the pups then when his tone became rather serious and blue eyes fixed on him.

"Abigail said the FBI came to see you again while I was at the hospital. They still wanting you to help them profile the Flag Killer?"

"They are, but there's no need to worry. I have no interest in catching him unless he interferers with my or Francis' work. *Tattlecrime* is still pushing the theory that he's some twisted copycat of me, but the FBI know better. Still, my kills keep people reading."

Will grumbled a moment. "I don't like them hanging around us, Hannibal. What if they figure out who you really are? If they look too closely they'll realize my ID saying I'm from Shreveport instead of Baton Rouge is a lie. That ID might say the correct name, but everything else is still fake. Then what? We'd lose Abigail and they'd find hers is fake too. The pups-"

Hannibal cut his mate off by enveloping him and the twins in a hug; ever the protective alpha and determined to ease his omega's worries before he upset the children.

"There isn't any need for you to be apprehensive, Will. No one is suspicious of me or our family. As far as the FBI is concerned, I am an alpha of stellar reputation who has done exactly as they requested. The Flag Killer knows nothing of us, he isn't a threat and will not bring doom to our door. I am simply their preferred psychiatrist at the moment."

Will took a breath; logically he knew Hannibal to be right but he'd never be rid of that voice in the very back of his mind that told him everything would be stripped away eventually, that all of it would end bloody and cold.

"I guess you're right, I should be focused on Sebastian. I just don't like the idea of them loitering around us."

"Papa?" Hannibal's maroon eyes fell to Claude's own. "Why is Daddy sad?"

He flashed the child a smile. "He's not, son. Everything is all right." Will pulled the boy closer, squeezed him and kissed the top of his head lovingly. "Why don't you and Veronique go get Winston ready? It's almost time for his walk and I'm sure Abigail would like the company."

The twins didn't need telling twice, they'd inherited their love of dogs from Will and jumped at any opportunity to be around the animal. They fussed for their fathers to set them down, then hurried off out the room in search of their big sister and Winston. Both Will and Hannibal watched them go before their attention turned back to one another. In an instant Will had filled his mate's arms and clung to him tightly. The omega mumbled an apology for worrying the elder man but Hannibal brushed it off as not needed. Will hadn't long given birth, his hormones were still trying to stabilize and protecting their identities would always be a source of anxiety and stress for them. Will's concerns had been perfectly understandable and nothing that needed an apology.

"I love you, Will. You are my mate. I love Abigail, the twins and Sebastian, they are my pups. I have only ever truly loved one other person and I failed Mischa. I will not fail the five of you."

Will clung tighter to Hannibal, breathed in that comforting alpha scent and fisted the back of his suit jacket. "I know you won't, and I know you love us. I won't ask you to tell me what happened to your sister, I know you don't want to talk about her, but you know she loved you, right? She was your baby sister, of course Mischa loved you."

Bless Will's kindness. Most probably assumed Hannibal to be immune to things like trauma, didn't realize the unflappable exterior was just a shell and that the loss of his dear sister had left Hannibal mute for a number of years afterwards. Hannibal's PTSD wasn't something that anyone other than Will knew about and that was the way it would remain.

~X~

Even with the final renovation happening to the House, assisting the FBI and a new pup to care for, Hannibal had found time to restock the refrigerators. Dermot Driscoll was the name of his latest victim, a rather rude and arrogant attorney, and Hannibal had taken just about every organ from him as well as a few good steaks. Will was still healing and needed all his strength back.

While his family wasn't banned from the basement, it wasn't a place any but him normally had cause to be, so Hannibal indulged in the silence as he unpacked his bounty from the cooler and put them away in the fridges. In just his waistcoat and shirtsleeves Hannibal looked significantly more casual that usual, but this was his quiet time after all. Kokoretsi was a dish he'd not prepared in a while and something Will had rather enjoyed, maybe he'd pair it with a pickled salad.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs then and Hannibal glanced to his watch before closing the cooler. Late was the hour so, instead of greeting his eldest properly, he simply continued tidying away his things as he spoke.

"You should be in bed, Abigail."

"I know, Papa." That was something she'd picked up from the twins after Claude had questioned why she called their parents by their first names. After that she'd slowly started using papa and dad more and more until it had become second nature to her. Seeing Will's face light up when she'd first called him dad had been the highlight of Hannibal's week. "I can't sleep."

That finally had him face her. "Would you like me to get you something to help?"

If that meant warm milk or sedatives Abigail wasn't entirely sure – possibly both knowing Hannibal Lecter. Regardless she shook her head and padded further into the sterile basement.

"No, thank you. I did want to ask you something though."

Yes, Hannibal had already figured that out for himself. The teenager would have shown significantly more interest in the organs and meat he'd come home with were there nothing else on her mind.

"And what would that be, Abigail?"

"Well, there's a performance of King Lear at the end of next month, and I'd like to go see it. We've been studying the play in my online classes and our teacher said it might be good for us to watch the Ian McKellen version rather than just reading it. I heard about the performance and thought, maybe seeing it live would be helpful as well. It's just – well, the tickets aren't exactly cheep and they're selling out fast."

Hannibal hardly even paused to think about it before he nodded and began rolling his sleeves back down. "Very well. If you wish to see the play then I would be happy to take you. If you would like to you can invite your friend Marissa to join us."

Abigail seemed taken aback and actually furrowed her brow a little. "Wait, really? Just like that?"

He gave her a soft smile, the fatherly one he'd not known he had until the twins had been born. "Abigail, you should know by now that if you simply ask me politely for what you want, you will probably get it. I am rather pleased you have taken an interest in the theatre and literature, many your age don't anymore. I will purchase tickets tomorrow afternoon once I'm finished with my patient, so make sure to ask Marissa first thing in the morning."

"Okay." She nodded happily. "Thank you, Papa."

Abigail hugged him then and Hannibal stroked her dark hair gently. Gone was the scared little girl Jack Crawford had tried to make her, instead he held Abigail Lecter in his arms and she was most

certainly her father's daughter.

Chapter 2

While totally unintentional on Abigail's part, the trip to see King Lear had turned into something of a family outing for the older members of the Lecter clan. Beverly, Reba and Alana had taken the twins and Sebastian for the night at the House and, while he itched to be with his baby, an evening away would be good for Will. He trusted his friends to take care of his three pups and knew Hannibal quietly delighted in showing his omega off. When Abigail had asked to see the play she probably should have expected her papa to book a box for them rather than sitting them with the peasants; it had given her an excuse to wear the lovely black dress Hannibal had bought her though while her fathers had donned their tuxedos. Marissa looked a little lost, like she'd not quite realized just how rich Hannibal truly was. Psychiatry really was a lucrative profession if one played their cards correctly, helped the man was quite literally Lithuanian nobility as well.

Both Will and Hannibal had pretended not to overhear the girls when Marissa had quietly questioned what was around Will's neck and the subsequent explanation of an omega collar and what it meant. Sometimes it seemed like betas were a totally different species to alphas and omegas, they'd invented marriage as a makeshift mating, wedding rings were a copy of omega collars and yet betas hardly seemed aware of any of it.

When the house lights had gone down and the play begun Hannibal had glanced to his mate and daughter, it was nice for them to do something as a family that didn't involve the House. Besides, experiencing a little culture was beneficial for everybody.

A few hours passed with the group in silence save for the occasional shuffle as they shifted in their chairs, and Hannibal had to admit the actor playing Edmund had a real talent for bringing the character to life. Then, as it always did, the intermission came and everyone ventured out in search of drinks, chatter or just the restrooms. Marissa and the Lecters had gone for the former two which was where the Komedas found them and quickly pulled them into conversation.

"I might have known we'd run into you here, Hannibal." Missus Komeda grinned while her husband stood quietly beside her as usual. "Hello again, Will, and what a pleasure it is to see Abigail here. I'm afraid I don't know your friend."

Etiquette said Abigail should have done the introductions but Marissa simply shook Missus Komeda's hand and introduced herself.

"Marissa Schurr. I go to school with Abigail. Doctor Lecter was kind enough to invite me along this evening, and I'm very grateful he did, the play is excellent. Your the author, right? I recognize you from your book covers."

"That's me, my dear, recognized for my sins." The older woman's red lipstick pulled her lips into a dramatic smile before turning to Will clearly done with Marissa now her ego had been stroked. "News travels fast, I hear there is a new Lecter. Congratulations. You simply must tell me the name, you and Hannibal chose such beautiful names for your twins."

"Sebastian." Will supplied. "His name is Sebastian."

"Oh, how suave and elegant."

A blond alpha in his early twenties made his way up to the Komedas then and handed over a glass of red wine which earned a hum of gratitude from the beta woman. She paused a moment to take a sip before gesturing to the blond.

"This is Anders Corvene, he's my nephew." Yes, Hannibal vaguely remembered her mentioning a nephew once before – something about him being handsome and smart if he recalled correctly. "Anders, these are Doctor Hannibal Lecter, his mate Will, their daughter Abigail and her friend."

The blond alpha flashed each of them a smile though his eyes lingered on Abigail a moment. "A pleasure to meet you all. My aunt has mentioned you before, Doctor Lecter. I must say, I am rather a fan of your time as a surgeon."

Though they all conversed for several minutes, Hannibal spent the whole time assessing Anders as best he could. The man was Will's height with a messy undercut and perceiving gray eyes, he was broad, personable and most certainly lived up to the word handsome. However, something about him put Hannibal on alert and it wasn't simply that this was the most dominant alpha in the building after himself, or maybe it was the amount of attention Anders paid to his sixteen-year-old daughter.

Eventually though, the lights flickered and they said their goodbyes so they could watch the second half. Missus Komeda had rather strongly pushed for Hannibal to throw another dinner party because it was 'a whole show' every time he cooked, but his dinner parties could be placed on hold until Sebastian was older just as they had after the twins had been born.

Freed from their conversation, the four of them returned to their box and watched the rest of the play.

~X~

Will's eyes opened. It was dark, too dark, no moonlight drifted in from underneath the bedroom curtains. He could hear Claude, Veronique and Sebastian all crying in the distance – a cacophony which had him launch out of bed not stopping to wonder why Hannibal wasn't in bed beside him. He had to get to his pups, had to find out what was wrong. Claude's room was first and the door kicked open but Claude wasn't anywhere to be seen.

"Claude?!" No response came, just the continued distant crying.

He hurried to Veronique's room to find another empty bed, then the nursery where Sebastian's crib lay just as vacant. Tears pricked his eyes as fear overtook him. Where were his pups?! He could hear them but they were nowhere to be found. Will's heart beat faster and faster in his chest as he screamed out for them and searched, as he begged for his alpha to help him.

In a desperate panic he charged downstairs in the pitch black, uncaring for his own safety, and through the dining room to the kitchen where he came to a dead halt. There, lined up on the island of stainless steel was a sight that nearly broke him. His pups tied up like some sort of roast while Jack Crawford smirked from the other side of the island. In his hands was a Glock which he aimed at the children in turn.

"Poor little Will, always so week." Jack taunted. "You're nothing without that pathetic alpha, are you?"

"Hannibal!" Where was his alpha? Where was the sire of his pups who'd vowed to protect them all? "Hannibal!"

"He can't help you." Will jolted away as Mason entered the room and walked towards the island dragging Abigail by the hair behind him; she kicked and screamed but couldn't break free.

Will felt as though he couldn't breathe, his chest felt tight and his mind fogged. The world shook from side to side as tears blurred his vision.

"Will." The shaking came faster. "Will, wake up. William!"

The omega shot upright in bed dripping sweat and crying profusely. Hannibal was there beside him whispering soft words and holding him close. A nightmare? Had a nightmare really felt that real? His alpha continued to soothe him, pet his sweaty hair and assure him all was well, but that didn't stop Will shaking.

"The pups-"

"Are safe, I assure you. It is 3:19 am. You are in Baltimore, Maryland. Your name is Will Graham."

Hannibal's calm and annunciated words eased Will's mind, drew him back to the real world and away from Jack's smirk. He and Mason were dead, they'd hurt nobody else.

"Do – do you think my screaming woke the twins up? I don't want to scare them."

A kiss found its way to Will's sweaty forehead. "I don't think so, but how about we check on them all anyway? You get your breath back and then we'll go."

~X~

Yet another victim of the Chesapeake Ripper had been discovered not too far from Wolf Trap. This one had been Gareth Redgrave in life, a sockbroker originally from Kentucky who'd not had so much as a parking fine. The Ripper had taken his kidneys, liver and heart, then filled the cavity with straw and strung him up with wire like a scarecrow. Clearly there was a message but FBI hadn't quite worked out what it was just yet. Special Agent Michael McCoy – or, annoyingly enough, Bones to his co-workers – shouldn't have been there. He'd been put on the Flag Killer case, but something had told him, given long enough, the Flag Killer would become as prolific as the Chesapeake Ripper and McCoy wanted to see if he could look at the murderer from a new angle by taking a look at the Ripper. Trophies were taken from the Ripper's victims unlike the Flag Killer's, but both men obviously thought themselves artists. There had been a rumor go around the crime scene investigators that the Ripper was actually a demon who could teleport, that was why there wasn't ever any useful evidence left behind, and, though McCoy thought the idea of demons stupid, he could see why that was the conclusion they'd been left with. The Chesapeake Ripper would end up in the history books as one who got away just like Jack the Ripper had, the Flag Killer would be there with them if McCoy didn't find a lead soon. No, looking at the case by looking at another

serial killer was a lie, he'd just wanted to remind himself he wasn't the only agent failing to stop a murderer.

Age, gender, dynamic, race, nothing had any baring he could see on how either serial killer chose a victim. Sure, there weren't any recorded omega victims, but that could have just been because they'd not been viewed as a challenge rather than something of note. These two weren't like the Tooth Fairy, he killed anybody inside whichever house he'd chosen, that one was a wild animal while the Ripper and Flag Killer had disturbingly more refined approach to slaughter. Anything useful he knew about his target had come from Doctor Lecter – that man had been a well of useful knowledge and insight. However, an overachieving alpha medical student hadn't narrowed McCoy's suspect pool as much as he'd have thought. Turned out that all medical students were either all about 'I want to help people' or were the overachieving arrogant sort – disturbing, some were both.

He sighed as he stared at Redgrave strung up before him. What possessed people to murder each other in such sadistic and flamboyant ways? There was nothing else for it, he'd need to speak with Doctor Lecter again and hope for something new. He felt like Inspector Lestrade from the Sherlock Holmes novels, a moron just waiting for someone else to solve the crime so he could shut the case down and move on.

Chapter 3

To say Will wasn't happy would have been an understatement. He hated being apart from his pups for too long, especially with Sebastian only being a few months old, so he sat in the Bentley grumbling to himself while Hannibal drove the last mile. Hannibal had kindly taken them out for brunch since he had no early patients and Will hadn't left the house in almost a week other than to let Winston into the backyard. Their day had been going rather nicely, then Special Agent McCoy had called demanding Hannibal join him at the latest crime scene the Flag Killer had made and deprived Will of getting home to his pups on time. Yes, Abigail was with them, but she'd surely be distracted by Marissa who had come over for an early study session. So Will grumbled while Hannibal drove and did his best to assure Will it wouldn't be too much of a delay.

The moment Hannibal's Bentley came to a stop McCoy had spun around and started toward them with a determined expression.

"This won't take long, Will. Our pups are perfectly safe with Abigail and I will let you order one of those horrific pizzas for dinner if you like."

That made Will laugh. "You've resorted to bribery already? Hannibal, I thought you had more in you."

"Be a good little omega, Will. You know I can't abide rudeness. Now, would you like to see what this killer is capable of first-hand?

Part of Will would always tell him not to enjoy the blood, the intricate art a killer could create, but he couldn't stop liking it. With a nod the pair exited the vehicle and strode the last few steps to McCoy.

"I'm sorry to call you over here out of the blue, Doctor Lecter, but I was hoping you might be able to give us more insight if you were to see the seen for yourself."

"Not a problem at all, Agent McCoy. Might I introduce my mate Will Graham."

"Nice to meet you." McCoy said more as an afterthought than real greeting before turning back to the task at hand. "The body is just over here in this grass. Hard to see from the parking lot but so very visible to anybody walking the paths on the other side."

They followed McCoy over to the body to find a woman flayed and impaled on a flag of her own skin just like the others. People could have been forgiven for mistaking her for a red mannequin upon first glance, but up close the muscles and dry blood was inescapable. Lifeless eyes stared out at the trail glassy and unnerving without eyelids to cradle them, teeth like pearly daggers jutting out of crimson gums.

While Hannibal looked to the medical skill used before moving on to the mental state, Will found something else when he looked at that woman's body, he saw the design.

"He was brave this time."

That comment drew the attention of both Hannibal and McCoy but for very different reasons. McCoy hadn't expected anything useful to come out of the omegas mouth while Hannibal had long

wondered how much Will could truly see.

"Go on, Will." Hannibal encouraged.

"Flaying takes up my time – I don't mind because I want them to suffer, I want them to feel every second of pain and know I am responsible for it. I easily overpower my prey and that's exactly what they are, prey. These people have given up their rights as people and must now face my judgement. They are lower than animals. I know I need to work skilfully but I'm still new to this and make mistakes. Getting the skin off in one piece is harder than it looks. I'm still evolving. I've not been quite happy with it for a while though, having to take them elsewhere to do the deed then set them up somewhere like art. " Will began to circle the corpse. "I want them to watch me carry out their punishment, I want them to be alive when I place them so they know a place they cherished is mine now, not there's. They've forfeited their right to anything. I've been severing their vocal cords and restraining them to keep them quiet and still, but they move around too much and damage the flag. Why can no one accept their punishment? Why can't they take responsibility for what they've done? I'm a sadist, I enjoy seeing the shock and blood loss kill them slowly. I enjoy watching them realize there is no escaping me. I want them to reflect on their actions before I impale them, and then I watch the life leave their eyes. I observe my work, I oversee their deaths as it my duty as judge, jury and executioner. This is my design."

McCoy simply stared at Will for several seconds unsure of how to respond to his disturbingly accurate understanding of the Flag Killer. He'd consulted Hannibal due to his years of experience – the man was a damn expert – but Hannibal's mate had some kind of innate understanding of monsters an it had actually alarmed McCoy for a moment.

"I am inclined to agree with you entirely, Will." Hannibal told him as he left the body and returned to his mate's side. "He wants to kill on site even if it means he could be caught because it is another way to torture them. This parking lot serves the nature trails for this park, I wouldn't be surprised if you find she regularly comes here. He's stopped severing the vocal cords as well, he's found another way of shutting them up. He'll have started drugging them."

The federal agent seemed to snap out of his pondering about Will then flipped a little notebook open and quickly sifted through to the desired page. "Our guys found something in this and the last victim's toxicology. Roc – Rocru – Rockronium."

"Rocuronium," Hannibal corrected. "It is a neuromuscular blocker."

"A what?"

"A paralytic. Anyone injected with it would remain fully conscious and feel everything that was done to them, they'd just be unable to move. Rocuronium would also affect the muscles controlling breathing. I suspect your medical examiners will find signs of this woman having been intubated to prevent suffocation. His goal is to make them die slowly, he'd not risk them dying early and he's clearly got enough medical training to intubate a person."

"So he's making his work easier without comprising on how much they suffer? Fucking animal."

Will shook his head. "No. No, he isn't an animal. None of this is frenzied or wild, it's calm and calculated. He's highly organized and systematic."

McCoy found himself a little surprised by the omega's lack of emotion towards the scene itself, he was a FBI agent who'd been seeing horrors for years yet it had still shocked him. There was

something not quite right about Will Graham, but he wasn't sure what to do about it if anything. Normally he was a man who'd speak his mind but having Hannibal's input was the best thing to happen to the Flag Killer case and he'd got no wish to lose him because McCoy had insulted the man's mate. So, abandoning any ideas about mentioning his unease, McCoy got back to the case.

"This idea of punishment keeps coming up and it's clear this guy feels like he has a right to act as judge and jury, but what could he possibly be punishing these people for? Only a handful of them have had any criminal record.."

Hannibal had wondered about that for a while himself, but was fairly certain he'd come to the correct conclusion. "This killer cannot abide the mistreatment of omegas. The first victim you consulted me about had just abandoned his pregnant mate for another woman, yes? As a beta he'd not have realized just how shattering that was for an omega, but he likely didn't care. The few you mentioned with a criminal record were known to be violent and at least two of them had been charged with domestic abuse. The Flag Killer almost certainly abhors any mistreatment of omegas, even something most would overlook will stick in his mind."

Hannibal knew a killer's trigger didn't have to make sense to others, anything could set them off, but he fully understood the Flag Killer's. He found mistreatment of omegas to be one of the rudest crimes one could commit.

"Thank you, Doctor Lecter. I can work with that. I'm sorry to have interrupted your morning, I'll not keep you any longer."

Will was delighted to get out of there and return to his young pups, something Hannibal wouldn't deny him. So, after polite goodbyes, the mates departed knowing they'd not heard the last about the Flag Killer or Special Agent McCoy. As they drove away McCoy again got the sense something was off about Will Graham and maybe Hannibal as well.

~X~

After a couple of months when Sebastian had started sleeping through the night, Hannibal had finally thrown another of his famous dinner parties much to Missus Komeda's delight. Neither Will nor Abigail were great fans of them, but at least the pair had learned how to manage conversation without Hannibal needing to rescue them.

While Hannibal had been known to rotate people through his dinner parties, a totally new face was rare, but Hannibal had thought it only polite to invite Anders Corvene simply to see what this man truly was. Of course Missus Komeda had been delighted her nephew had been welcomed into Hannibal's extravagant world alongside her.

Forks occasionally scrapped against plates and the smell of smoke from candles faintly filled the air as they all ate. Alana had once again graced them with her presence but the majority of Hannibal's focus was on Anders. An alpha of only twenty-one, but truly something intriguing. Will had noticed his mate's curiosity as well, likely because he was just as suspicious, but didn't comment on it.

"I must say, Hannibal, I was rather expecting a show." Missus Komeda said after a sip of wine. "You always give us a show. The food is as wonderfully presented as always, but you've not given us that usual Lecter flare."

Hannibal smirked. "I felt it would be nice to slow down and have a quiet meal for a change. No extravagance, just indulgent, elegant cuisine."

Anders cocked an eyebrow. "So you're putting on a show of not putting on a show. Subtle to the end, Doctor Lecter."

"Exactly, Mister Corvene."

Mister Komeda chose one of those rare occasions to pipe up then. "We'd wondered if maybe your newborn had exhausted you. I remember when Anders was new to the world, my sister-in-law despaired with him."

"No need to make it sound as though I bounced off the walls, Uncle." Gray eyes met Abigail's blue ones. "You must think me a terror."

That had her chuckle. "Oh, there's nothing terrifying about you, Mister Corvene."

Abigail had met true monsters and, while there was something dark under the surface, Anders most certainly wasn't terrifying. It had become clear he was rather taken with Abigail, the way he kept looking at her had left no doubt in their minds. Being sixteen, she was of legal mating age though it was unusual for an omega to mate so young these days, and Hannibal nor Will had any intention of letting any alpha swan off with their eldest daughter. Although, what had surprised them was Abigail hadn't rebuffed him, she actually seemed somewhat interested in Anders and thus why Hannibal was determined to learn all he could about this young alpha. Unlike his other guests, Anders didn't feel the need to talk about himself or boast, that was something Hannibal respected about the younger alpha, but Missus Komeda had provided the last piece to the puzzle as it were.

"What is you're intend to become after medical school, Anders?" Asked his aunt. "I know you've told me before but I always forget. Maybe Hannibal has some words of wisdom for you after all his years as a doctor."

"A Cardiothoracic surgeon, Aunt -"

Hannibal, Will and Abigail all shared a look. A young alpha of great intelligence as well as a medical student. Suddenly the darkness they'd all felt lurking around Anders Corvene made perfect sense. Anders Corvene was the Flag Killer.

XXXX

So, I went ahead and made a portrait of Anders simply because I had a spare five minutes.

Anders Corvene

Chapter 4

Rain had been falling for most of the day and had left the evening cold. It splattered against windows with a violence thud with no signs of easing off any time soon. None of the Lecters cared though, they had more important things to focus on than rain. The twins had been put to bed, Sebastian had slipped off into the land of slumber as well and Abigail had set the table for their guest. The clock had just chimed eight when the doorbell sounded, but Hannibal hadn't left his study. Instead he remained staring out the window and waited for Abigail to show Anders into the study as she'd been told.

"Good evening, Doctor Lecter." The younger alpha greeted when he entered and Hannibal turned to face his guest. "Thank you for the dinner invitation, it was very kind of you."

Hannibal smiled and moved to the crystal decanter on the other side of the room. "You are most welcome, Mister Corvene. Might I tempt you to a nice single malt? Seventy-five years old. While I prefer wine, my mate has a preference for whiskey and I suspect you do as well."

"You'd be right, I am somewhat partial. And please, call me Anders."

"Very well, Anders it is." said Hannibal as he poured them both a glass then handed one over before he offered Anders a seat. It wasn't lost on either of them that Hannibal hadn't offered the blond use of his own given name. "I hope you enjoy your drink."

Anders took a sip and tried not to think about just how much Hannibal had paid for that bottle. Will Graham truly was a very adored omega.

"That is magnificent. I find myself envious of your mate if he gets to drink this regularly." Silence lingered a moment as Hannibal observed the younger alpha. "I'm grateful for the chance to see Abigail again, she's a wonderful girl, Doctor Lecter."

"Indeed she is. Not to sound boastful, but my daughter is really rather exceptional. Abigail has a bright future ahead of her, I am sure of that." Hannibal took a sip of his own drink and finally got to the point. "Did you know I've been consulting on the Flag Killer case?" Anders stilled at the abrupt change in subject. "It became rather quickly apparent to me that the Flag Killer thinks nothing of his victims, that they have to be punished for their crimes in the most excruciating way. Of course, deciphering a killer's motive is never quite the same as hearing it from their own mouth." He took another drink of rich amber liquid before fixing Anders with a stern expression. "So, Anders, are you going to admit who and what you are, or shall we continue pretending I don't know you're the Flag Killer?"

Silence lingered as Anders' mind scrambled to form a plan. He couldn't just deny it, Hannibal wouldn't be fooled, but admitting it would likely have him carted away by police. He could attack the older alpha, kill him quickly to keep his secret, but that would have shattered Abigail and Anders wasn't actually sure he could overpower Hannibal. He'd been invited to dinner though, surely the FBI could have just shown up on his doorstep if Hannibal had told them of his suspicions, so maybe the older alpha was curious more than anything else. Psychiatrists liked to talk and listen, so perhaps just admitting to it was oddly the wisest choice available to him.

"Very well, Doctor Lecter, you have me." Anders downed what was left of his drink and set the glass aside. "I am who Freddie Lounds has dubbed the Flag Killer."

Hannibal nodded clearly happy with the blond's choice. "There is no need for you to look so stricken, Anders. Truthfully, I was content to leave you to your own devices as long as you stayed out of my way and did not affect my family. You kill those who harm omegas, I can respect that. However, you *have* begun affecting my family, you're interest in Abigail has not gone unnoticed."

"I would *never* hurt her." Anders was quick to say, voice laced with as much assurance as was physically possible.

"I am fully aware of that. It would go against your fundamental core belief. What you may not have noticed is that Abigail is actually rather taken with you also. She won't speak the words aloud, not yet anyway, but I know my daughter and can practically smell it on her."

"Good. That's good. I know it's selfish, but she acts so much like a beta that some have shown interest in her and I hate that. Betas can't mate, they can't share a real bond, and Abigail deserves that, even if it isn't with me."

"I have little preference for dynamic or gender." Hannibal confessed with ease. "Alpha, beta, omega, I do not care. However, I agree with you that all omegas deserve a proper bond just as we alphas do. Betas cannot and therefore are totally unaware of a whole part of our existences."

"Most alphas wouldn't admit they've slept with another alpha." Anders mused mostly to himself.

While not illegal, there was a sense of taboo regarding alpha-alpha or omega-omega couples that probably wouldn't ever go away; their rarity helped to perpetuate it.

"I am not most alphas." Oh, Hannibal most certainly wasn't. "So, shall we dine?"

Hannibal stood and cleared away the glasses all while Anders watched in utter amazement. His brow furrowed deeply but words didn't manage to leave his lips until Hannibal had reached the study door.

"You still intend for us to all have dinner together? I just admitted to being a serial killer, shouldn't you be calling the police?"

Hannibal raised an eyebrow. "I could if you like, but I have a rather wonderful meal prepared and would hate for it to go to waste. Come."

So, with little other choice, Anders followed Hannibal into the dining room where the found Abigail and Will had already gathered. The two said quick greetings as they stood by the fire tickling Winston; normally Hannibal would have objected to having the dog in the dining room while they ate, but it was an unusual day. Soon they were all seated with Hannibal at the head of the table with his mate and daughter to his right and Anders to his left. From the outside nothing was amiss, but Anders felt the tension.

"Did you admit you're a serial killer or try to lie?" Abigail asked after a few moments and Anders' eyes went wide, he'd not expected Hannibal to share what he'd learned with his family.

"We'd not be having dinner if he'd lied." Will informed simply. "Lying would have been rude and you know Hannibal despises rudeness."

"Anders has been gentlemanly enough to be quite forthcoming about it. He went so far as to insist to me he'd never harm Abigail."

The girl snorted drawing everybody's attention to her, not something for the dinner table but Hannibal would let it slide just this once.

"You'd have killed him by now if you thought he'd try, Papa. Hell, his heart would already be in the oven."

Anders paled not because of the low-key death threat but because of the mention of organs. He'd wondered why Hannibal had no fear of letting his family dine with a known serial killer and the answer had finally dawned on him – because they did it daily.

"Oh Christ, you're the Chesapeake Ripper."

Maroon eyes turned to the blond. "I am surprised it took you so long to work out, Anders. I hope this won't spoil your appetite."

"So the rumor is true," Anders looked down to his plate. "You eat the organs you take. The Chesapeake Ripper is a cannibal."

Will smirked. "Oh it's not just Hannibal. We're something of a … murder family. Everyone at this table has blood on their hands, you and Hannibal are just the most artistic about it."

"You wish for Abigail to be your intended mate, yes?" The older alpha's voice remained level and baritone. "This means you wish to be part of our family and there should be no dark secrets among family." He turned to Abigail. "Is that something you'd like, Abigail? To be his intended?"

She swallowed suddenly a little uncomfortable about discussing the subject with her fathers, but eventually nodded. "I'd like to get to know Anders better at the very least."

At the House she'd never wanted a mate and frankly still wasn't sure she did, but Anders could understand her in the way Hannibal understood Will, and that was something she wanted for herself.

"If it is what you want, it shall be done." Hannibal nodded in agreement then turned back to Anders who hadn't eaten another mouthful since his realization. "My daughter believes you worthy of being part of this family, part of this pack. The remaining questions are: Do you feel you are worthy of it? And, are you willing to do what you must for her?"

"You mean acknowledge you as pack alpha." Anders set his cutlery down as candles flickered on the table. Hannibal hadn't needed to confirm that for him, he knew it was true. Anders wasn't some weak alpha others could walk over, he'd not cower in a corner. That said, Hannibal was a thoroughbred and had apparently been killing for decades as was he someone Anders greatly admired. The Ripper always left such wonderful art behind while so many others just left carnage. "And if I refuse?"

A growl left Hannibal's throat then, a deep rumble none of them had ever heard from him before. He wasn't the sort of alpha who needed to growl, not when his sheer dominant presence was always enough to have people knowing their place; that and he'd always thought it rude. Yet that night wasn't a normal one and Anders had needed to fully understand what would happen. Anders knew too much about Hannibal and his family now, so the man wouldn't hesitate to kill him if needed.

Most would probably assume the younger alpha would beat a middle-aged one, that youth assured victory, but Anders wasn't sure Hannibal would ever leave his prime. He might have had many years on Anders, but he was exceptionally strong and formidable underneath that suit of his. Next to Hannibal's god-like talents and capabilities Anders was but a child. The older man was right, he was the irrefutable pack alpha, when he stopped to think about it, Anders didn't actually see a reason to try overthrowing him. The Chesapeake Ripper was an artist he'd long since admired and had always wanted to learn from; having him as his pack alpha would be as having him as a mentor. So, after several moments of the Lecters staring at him, Anders tilted his head up and to the side exposing his neck to the older man. In an instant Hannibal had grabbed him by the throat and, though the grasp was harsh, he didn't squeeze, instead he brushed his thumb lightly over Anders' scent gland then returned to his meal. With that, he'd bowed to Hannibal's dominance and accepted his position as a lesser alpha to him.

"Do not let your food go cold, Anders." Was all his new pack alpha said while the omegas seemed pleased with the turn of events.

Anders' gray eyes tilted down to his food; being a part of this pack meant eating people.

"Would you call Hannibal a demon for eating the rude?" Will asked when Anders hadn't begun eating again. "We're all just meat in the end, and life is just natures way of keeping meat fresh."

"Do you know what demons call humans with no self-restraint? No decorum or basic etiquette, just their own arrogance, Anders?" Hannibal didn't wait for an answer. "Food."

Anders thought of his own kills for a moment. Those people were less than pigs to him, why shouldn't their bodies go to nourish others? They'd served no good in life so why not make use of their corpses. Cannibalism wasn't something he'd ever considered before, but it didn't repulse him. He'd not even known Hannibal to be the Chesapeake Ripper for a full hour, yet the man had already opened his eyes to so much. With no further hesitation, Anders took up his fork and continued to eat. Bowing to Hannibal as his pack alpha was no hardship when he could learn so much from a legend among murderers.

Chapter 5

About three months had passed since Anders and Hannibal had admitted who they really were to one another, and things had been going surprisingly well. In public Hannibal was his medical mentor and future father-in-law, in private they'd complemented one another's work while Hannibal had taught him better flaying techniques – a serial killer wasn't born fully formed after all. It was Anders' relationship with Abigail he most cherished though. From the moment he'd first laid eyes on her he'd known she was special, she was his omega and he her alpha. Just as Abigail had wanted, they'd spent time together getting to know who the other was at their core.

"Did you enjoy the performance?" He asked with genuine curiosity as he drove them away from the theatre. "I'm afraid it didn't occur to me that the opera is more Doctor Lecter's idea of entertainment than that of his family."

That assessment wasn't exactly wrong, she'd wanted to see King Lear but held no great love for the theatre.

"I actually enjoyed it. *Madam Butterfly* was really rather heartbreaking and yet so hopeful. She reminds me of Dad in a way. He had such hope even when things looked hopeless, fortunately it paid off for him because he found Papa."

Anders was tempted to ask exactly what that meant, he knew something terrible had happened in her and Will's past but felt it the wrong time to ask. Instead of tipping into the rudeness he knew the Lecters couldn't abide, Anders moved the subject along.

"In a few months there is a performance of Macbeth, I wonder if you'd like to accompany me?

As Anders drove the pair discussed Shakespeare at length and all she'd learned from her classes. While no great expert, Abigail had excelled at her schooling and would read just about anything simply because she'd been denied for so very long. While Will had discovered a love of fishing and dogs, Abigail hadn't quite settled on any one thing yet, so she was more than happy to let Anders show her what the world had to offer.

"Hannibal has raised a very intelligent daughter."

"He's not really my father." She didn't know why she'd mentioned that. Abigail had no intention of telling him about the house, yet at least, and blood didn't make family.

"I know," Anders confessed. "You don't smell like him. Well, you do, but not in the way an alpha's pup normally does and you're too old to be Will's."

Her scent would always give her away. Omegas and alphas always possessed a whiff of their parents in their scents no matter their age, but Abigail's wouldn't ever match up to those of her fathers'. Claude, Veronique and Sebastian wouldn't ever be doubted, but Abigail needed a document to prove she was their daughter.

"I'd never stopped to think that Will and I aren't actually all that different in age."

"None of that matters, Abigail. He and Hannibal are your fathers now and they obviously love you tremendously." Anders sighed then as he turned a corner. "A lot of people don't get that."

Oh, Abigail was all too aware of that fact. "You sound as though you speak from experience, Anders."

Another sigh. "I do. I'm an only child and my parents died when I was six in a car crash. A man pulled out in front of us from nowhere. I can still remember him insisting it was my mother's fault, that omegas shouldn't have been allowed to drive, they couldn't be trusted nor did they have the competency. He blamed my mother for what he'd done, he blamed the woman he killed simply because she was an omega."

Suddenly Anders' intense urge to punish those who mistreated omegas all made sense. In some way, each time he punished one of his victims, he avenged the deaths of his parents."

"I'm sorry."

"Thank you, but it was a long time ago. The only other family I had was my aunt and she didn't really know what to do with me, so I found myself at boarding school until Johns Hopkins. Loves kids, does my aunt, but she loves being able to pass them back to their parents most of all."

Yes, that was something Abigail had noticed. Missus Komeda always asked about the twins and Sebastian but hadn't struck her or anyone else as mother material.

Silence settled then for several minutes, a calm quietude rather than something of tension. It wasn't until stopping at a light that Anders finally broke the silence between them.

"Abigail, might I ask you something a little personal?" She nodded that he could and let out an affirming hum. "Are you willing to accept me as your mate even though I'm a serial killer because it is what you honestly want, or because Doctor Lecter thought us a good match?"

"… Both, I suppose. I've experienced the acts of monsters and so-called good people and I don't wish to again. In my life serial killers are the only ones I've found trustworthy. The Chesapeake Ripper is my father, a man who took me in when he didn't have to and killed those who hurt me and Will. The Tooth Fairy is insane but he has gone out of his way to help people I care about. Now there's you. You don't care that I'm not like normal omegas, just willing to accept me for who I am."

"I love you *because* you're not like other omegas." He loved her? He had actually just said that? "Also, did you just say Tooth Fairy? Don't tell me he's some kind of cousin in this murder family of yours."

That had Abigail smile. "Not a cousin, no. I'm not sure what D is exactly, but he is exceptionally fond of my Papa and will do just about anything he asks."

Dolarhyde had mostly spent his time at the House since they'd burnt down the Madison-May and Marcus had escaped them. He'd gone right back to guarding omegas but this time without the sexual slavery aspect and threats. Having a routine, medication and Reba in his life had done wonders for his mental state.

"The Tooth Fairy is part of your father's pack?"

"That's never been needed. Papa can pull on his leash whenever he pleases. Papa won't say it out loud, but D is more of a pet than part of the pack."

Anders didn't quite believe what he'd just heard. The Chesapeake Ripper had full control over the Tooth Fairy, that sounded ridiculous but Hannibal was a master manipulator and shouldn't have been underestimated. The three most prolific serial killers in modern memory and they were basically all part of the same family; murder family indeed.

"You call him D?"

"His real name is kind of a mouthful." Abigail shrugged. "Let's talk about something else."

Just as Hannibal couldn't deny Will, Anders couldn't bring himself to deny Abigail.

~X~

Will had been in the living room reading for maybe an hour. The twins and Sebastian were asleep, Hannibal had some errands to run before coming home and Abigail was with Anders, so Will had the whole house to himself. Outside the night sky had taken on an inky appearance with a blanket of clouds blocking the stars, but Will didn't care, he had a warm fire and comfy chair to indulge in. What did truly bother him was Freddie Lounds and her terrible writing. Hannibal was an avid reader of her work for his own unique reasons, but Will detested her. The woman printed nothing but assumptions and lies – mostly about his beloved Hannibal – yet never seemed to face any real consequences for it. The latest article went on about the Flag Killer striking again and leaving this victim inside his own hardware store, while that portion was true, the part about him working with the Chesapeake Ripper because the liver was apparently missing couldn't have been further from the truth.

It was that moment Hannibal entered the room having finished his errands, he flashed his sweet omega a smile then bent to kiss him.

"Everything all right, brangusis? You seem disgruntled."

"I'm fine, Hannibal. Freddie Lounds is printing garbage again, that's all." He tossed his tablet aside and stood to embrace his mate properly. "Claude kept asking for you, wanted you to read his and Roni's bedtime story. I told him you'd read the story tomorrow."

"Regrettably it is her own website, she can print what she wants. She will never know the truth, Will. I won't let anything happen to us or Anders because it would destroy Abigail." The two men separated then and Hannibal seated himself only to pull Will down into his lap. "Speaking of Abigail, how was she before she left with Anders?"

"Quietly excited seems like a good description. She really likes him, Hannibal, just doesn't let the world know it. I'm glad for her, with her being so young when she entered the House, I thought – I thought -"

"That she'd never know love or a bond." Hannibal finished for him only for Will to nod. "Abigail is brave and will never stop surprising us.

They heard the front door open then and Abigail invite Anders inside, so the mates went to greet them only for Hannibal to be presented with a small cooler. He popped it open revealing a fresh

human liver.

"I wanted to say thank you for all the advice you've been giving me as of late. My professors are impressed with my improvements." Frankly, Anders' professors were astounded by him, one day he'd be a surgeon to rival even Hannibal. "I hope this will suffice."

"Liver, how thoughtful, Anders. Thank you. I have the perfect Chianti to pair with this."

Anders smiled brightly, pleased his gift had been accepted. He'd been dubious to begin with, but had come to enjoy the thought of being part of Abigail's murder family.

~X~

The evening air had a soft breeze to it that carried a refreshing coldness through the air, which all adored because that week had been unusually hot for the time of the year. Marcus glanced around the airport as parents barked orders at their kids and everybody else silently wished they'd just shut up. He'd spent quite some time recovering in Albuquerque before he'd begun rebuilding his money and network of people; he'd made damn sure to vet them first as well. Dolarhyde had seemed so loyal to him that the betrayal had not only caught him off guard but left Marcus with a permanent limp. He lit a cigarette as soon as he got outside and breathed in that wonderful smoke, wouldn't be as good as the one he had after tracking down the fuckers who'd stolen his property, killed his men and burnt the Madison-May down though. Francis Dolarhyde was the only name he knew for sure unfortunately and he'd gone to ground, had moved out of his place and just sort of vanished. That beta had worked for Jack before his empire had fallen and do-gooders had bought the place. It was the alpha in the fancy suit Marcus wanted dead the most though, Dolarhyde might have shot him, but it was the older alpha who'd orchestrated, he'd been the one giving the orders. Cutting off the head seemed like the wisest course of action if he wanted to reclaim his hold over Maryland's omega trafficking.

Cordell wasn't too far behind him, would be on the next plane, and then they'd begin. Stealing Cordell out from underneath Mason and Jack when he had was probably the most fortuitous thing he'd done in Maryland over the last five years. Having someone with decent medical skill and little to no moral compass was harder to come across than one would expect. Marcus glanced down to his cane; his running days were over, but everyone knew the tale of The Tortoise and the Hare.

Chapter 6

Night had again fallen by the time Marcus Delamare arrived outside the abandoned warehouse at the docks he'd be using to sell off his collected omegas. The warehouse backed onto the waterfront looking out into the far off distance – a little run down that looked rat infested, but it was secluded and fairly large so suited his needs perfectly. Beer, that was the first thing he smelt followed by mould. Two floors of water damage and peeling green paint with concrete pillars running down the middle to hold the roof up. None of it mattered, it didn't need to be the Ritz. Those pillars had proven themselves useful because they'd made a rather sturdy place to chain the omegas up.

The assholes Marcus paid had gotten a generator up and running while Cordell had done the last of his medical exams on the omegas. Gone were the grand auctions he'd held, for now anyway, instead he'd just sell to lowlifes to make some quick money and ensure people knew he was back in business and not to be messed with. He needed to rebuild trust with the wealthy alphas he'd sold to before, the ones still breathing of course, but afterwards Marcus would return to his comfortable lifestyle of power.

Dolarhyde's replacement had come in the form of an African-American man built like a brick wall named Kett. If one had thought Dolarhyde didn't speak much, they'd certainly not met Kett; compared to Kett, Dolarhyde was damn right chatty. Kett really wasn't the sort of man one wanted to meet in a dark alley, sadism oozed out of every pour and that constant grin of his would put the fear of God into just about everybody. While Kett might not have been quite as efficient as Dolarhyde had been, the man enjoyed money and hurting people too much to turn on him.

Yes, everything was going rather swimmingly for Marcus since his return to Maryland. As soon as he located Dolarhyde and his murderous collaborators, everything would be perfect.

~X~

Going for brunch had become a semi-frequent occurrence for Hannibal and Will. A little time away from the children was good for Will and Hannibal enjoyed having his mate to himself. Of course the food was never as flavorful as when Hannibal cooked, going out to eat did feel a little more like an unofficial date and that was something they'd never really bothered with before. That day, after finishing their meals, rather than returning to the car they'd gone for a walk among the shops. No real plan, just some window shopping and together time.

"This is nice." Said Will as they strolled hand in hand. "I was starting to think I was losing you to Alana with all the meetings you two have been having lately."

Hannibal breathed out a laugh. "As if that is even a possibility. I apologize for the meetings, there have been some issues regarding getting the House finally up to code and we have been inspected due to me personally funding most of the project. Alana is really rather talented at putting people at ease but, of course, the House isn't exactly the halfway house we have been portraying it as."

"I know," Will nodded. "Being as selective as we are about who is there, why and for how long will seem slightly out of the ordinary. I'm assuming that, since the twins and Sebastian are there right

now and D hasn't gone on a rampage, all of it turn out okay?"

"Yes, mylimasis, nothing to worry about at all. There was mention of someone wanting to do an article on the House at some point, however -"

Hannibal cut himself off when he realized he'd totally lost Will's attention to the husky across the street being fed half of its owner's sandwich. Had it come from anyone else, Hannibal would have labelled the act rude, but from Will it was more akin to a personality trait than active rudeness.

"Hannibal? I want another dog."

Frankly, the alpha was surprised it had taken Will so long to start demanding more animals.

"We already have Winston, he is enough. There are also the twins and Sebastian to think about."

Blue eyes turned to Hannibal's maroon ones. "They love animals just as much as I do. Besides, you built that huge heated space for Winston, that's perfectly big enough for at least five more dogs." Hannibal's face said it all they would *never* have five more dogs, he'd not wanted Winston to begin with. "Just one? Please, alpha?"

"Will, kindly do not 'please, alpha' me on this topic. More dogs would require more time and care which should be devoted to our pups."

The omega's mouth opened to point out dogs were pups but it closed again when Hannibal flashed him that look that said to drop the subject. He'd drop it for the time being, but Will had wanted another dog for a while now and Hannibal couldn't deny him forever. Besides, Hannibal had just bought the new Land Rover for going up to the House and moving the children around to spare his beloved Bentley. Honestly, Will thought he loved that car more than him some days; of course Hannibal wouldn't ever admit to that.

They continued their walk then, people went this way and that doing whatever was usual for these people's lives while Will thought of dogs and Hannibal of how much his adored omega had changed his life. From enigmatic lone wolf to happily mated father of four, a family man complete with the dog he'd never wanted; and Hannibal wouldn't have changed it for the world.

"You still giving that talk on Thursday night?" Asked Will after a few moments.

Hannibal nodded. "I am, yes. Anders tells me there has been rather a lot of interest in it over at Johns Hopkins. According to him, management was concerned they'd need to move it to a larger room."

Roughly two weeks earlier Johns Hopkins had contacted Hannibal regarding giving a talk to students on psychiatry and, to a lesser extent, how it lured him away from surgery. Of course Hannibal had been flattered and quickly agreed to the speech which had garnered rather a lot of interest thanks to Hannibal's outstanding reputation and Anders ensuring everyone knew about it. While he'd been accepted into medical school two years younger than most, Anders hadn't quite formed the friendships others had. Much like Hannibal, Anders could be suave and charming when he wished to be but much preferred his own company. Also just like Hannibal, Anders had quickly gone about establishing his own infallible reputation and, to be perfectly honest, having Doctor Hannibal Lecter as his future father-in-law had done wonders for it. Others saw kindness and morality in those piercing gray eyes of his, but he only valued those who could see the darkness lurking behind them.

"Will Abigail be going with you? You know, so she can spend time with Anders."

"She will," confirmed the alpha. "Though she insists it is because she's genuinely curious about the talk. You are very welcome to come as well, Will. I would like to have you there."

Will shuffled a little closer to Hannibal then, suddenly timid and unsure. "I don't know. There'll be a lot of people and you know I don't like that."

"I am sure you will be fine, Will. If Abigail and Anders are there you won't be alone in a crowd." Hannibal pressed a kiss to the top of his head. "I shall not force your attendance though. If you'd rather stay home with the pups, I shall not object."

Will resolved himself and agreed to go. Hannibal would literally be doing all the talking and it wasn't every day one got to witness first hand that their mate was a living legend in psychiatry.

Come Thursday, they'd all gathered to see Hannibal give his talk and, honestly, Will could have listened to that accented baritone read a take out menu. Glancing around at the medical students in attendance he could tell Hannibal's words had them all captivated, but that was to be expected when he could captivate an audience without any real effort. A natural orator was Hannibal, something he was fully aware of and used to his advantage whenever needed.

Will hadn't been surprised when, at the end of that talk, people had begun asking questions about his consulting work on the Flag Killer case; Freddie Lounds did like to print any nugget of information she got her filthy hands on. The subtle smirk Anders and Hannibal had shared did amuse him though.

Abigail sniffled beside him then causing Will's amusement to shift to slight concern. "Are you all right?"

"Yeah. Think I'm getting a cold is all. You think Papa will make that chicken soup thing he does for dinner? The one with the berries and star anise."

"You know Hannibal doesn't like it when we just call it chicken soup, but if you cough in front of him, he'll probably make it." Will teased which had the younger omega chuckle.

Sure enough, they all enjoyed Hannibal's chicken soup later that evening while Anders complemented the talk and pretended not to fuss over Abigail.

~X~

Will stared intently at the news report as he rocked Sebastian in his arms. The poor boy's colic had finally eased much to everyone's delight, normal sleeping had resumed. His youngest pup might have been at ease again, but the news stirred a worry up inside Will he'd not had in a long time. In the last two weeks sixteen omegas had gone missing from all over Maryland with absolutely no leads. The latest one was a Katrina Coleman who'd vanished from a parking lot at a strip mall, the part worse than the cameras having apparently not seen anything, was her one-year-old pup had just been abandoned in the backseat until passers-by had heard crying. Will squeezed Sebastian a little tighter. The news showed a statement the police had released regarding it where they'd stated that,

although an alarming spike in missing persons, and the similarities of the disappearances, Maryland was a big place and there wasn't any evidence to actually connect them all. Police clearly had a point, but Will had seen something the cops hadn't; each new disappearance crept ever closer to Baltimore. Add that to the fact none of these omegas had been ransomed back or found dead in a ditch, and Will couldn't shake the feeling men like Mason Verger had gone back to work.

He shut the television off then, didn't need to hear anymore, not when Mason was long dead. Blue eyes tilted down to Claude and Veronique who played quietly on the floor; she colored while Claude moved pieces around a chessboard. That had been Hannibal's latest thing to teach the twins, despite them being only four years old, he'd felt confident that proper instruction and encouragement could turn them into versatile chess players. While he still didn't fully understand the rules and had no strategy whatsoever, Claude did enjoy moving the pieces and the smile Hannibal gave him when he got it right. Will smiled softly, they might all have had his hair, but everything else was all Hannibal. Claude had wanted Abigail to play with him but had indeed come down with a cold and had been passed out in her bed for most of the day, so Winson had become a poor substitute.

Part of Will knew he was ignoring the very real possibility that Marcus Delamare had returned to the state, but he refused to acknowledge that; Hannibal always protected them. Besides, it wasn't just Hannibal acting as a lone wolf any longer, they were essentially an army. Three notorious alpha serial killers, a team of betas and omegas who ran the House providing them a valid reason for taking such an interest in any illegal matters involving omegas, and then there was Will and Abigail who weren't the timid creatures people assumed omegas to be. No, he refused to be frightened. If Marcus had returned to Maryland where Hannibal and Dolarhyde could get their hands on him, then the man was clearly a moron begging for death.

"Daddy, look!" Veronique lifted her book to show him the pony she'd colored purple and Will knelt down at her side.

No, Will wouldn't be afraid again. He refused. Many men had tried to kill or use him and those many men were dead. If Marcus returned, he'd suffer the same fate.

As if sensing his mate's need for comfort, Hannibal returned home then. Will listened quietly to him hang his coat up in the closet as Winston rushed off to greet him only to return with his tale wagging, a clear sign of excitement. That had Will raise an eyebrow as he continued to rock Sebastian, but Will didn't leave the living room. To be perfectly honest it the pizza Hannibal had brought Will during his pregnancy cravings had been the last time Winston had been so excited.

Hannibal entered the living room then with a fairly large tweed back in hand that Winston quickly rushed back to sniff. Wordlessly, he rounded Winston and turned the bag around revealing it to actually be a dog carrier; a tiny face peeked out.

"Fate appears to like you, Will."

"You bought us a new dog!" Will and the twins instantly locked on to the small puppy inside the carrier – for a man who didn't actually like dogs, he sure didn't mind spending three hundred dollars on a bespoke carrier. Hannibal happily took a sleeping Sebastian so Will could help the puppy out of the carrier and instructed the twins not to crowd the animal. "He's beautiful, Hannibal."

"Hmm. A colleague of mine asked me to accompany her to visit a patient she's been having issues with. When we arrived he'd attacked his roommates with a knife and was about to do the same to his dog. I thought you would prefer I brought him to you rather than him going to a shelter."

Will wouldn't ever turn down a dog, especially one in need. No, Hannibal had done exactly what Will would want and, yet again, proven he couldn't deny his mate anything for very long. With gentle touches, the twins stroked their new family member. Winston might have mostly been golden retriever but in truth was a mutt through and through, their new friend though, he was an English Foxhound – no, a Harrier, he was too small to be a Foxhound.

Eventually Hannibal wandered off to check on Abigail and set Sebastian down in his crib so he could make dinner, but Will nor the twins even noticed, they were too focused on the new arrival while Winston sniffed and wagged that tail.

"Daddy, what's her name?"

"He's a him, Roni, and I don't know. Shall we give him one?" Veronique nodded happily as Winston continued to make a fuss of his new friend. "How about Beau? I think that suits him, don't you?"

Hannibal truly wasn't a dog person in the slightest. While he'd not hurt animals, he didn't particularly like any of them, so the fact he treated Winston with such care had always meant the world to Will. He made meals from scratch for him, bathed and walked him when Will had been late in his pregnancies, and gone out of his way to see Winston had a proper space out in the yard. Now he'd accepted another dog into his pristine home when it would have been far simpler to just let police drop Beau off at a shelter, all because that was what would make Will happy. Hannibal truly was a perfect mate.

Chapter 7

The alpha startled awake, maroon eyes adjusted quickly to the darkness as he sat up and, for the briefest of moments, Hannibal couldn't understand what had woken him. The children weren't crying, no dogs barked and Will was fast asleep beside him. Touch, sight nor hearing had woken him and it certainly wasn't taste, which meant only his sense of smell remained as the cause. Hannibal took a deep breath filling his lungs; Will, fabric softener … heat. Adrenaline rushed into his blood at that scent tried to intoxicate him, but it hadn't come from his darling Will. Abigail, it was coming from Abigail.

Quietly he slipped out of bed doing his best to take shallow breaths as he pulled on a read sweater then approached her room. This faint smell was what had roused him to consciousness and chastised himself for the way his body wished to respond; Hannibal was a thoroughbred alpha, he was better than succumbing to base desires. The scent she gave off hadn't turned sickly sweet just yet so there was a reasonable amount of time before she overpowered the house and turned delirious.

Inside her bedroom lay Abigail squirming around in her bed tying herself up with sheets and already drenched in sweat – fortunately her clothing remained intact. Hannibal had to admit his confusion, she'd opted to stay on suppressants and Hannibal had seen to all her medical care, so she never should have gone into heat.

"Abigail?" He slowly stepped towards her and came to a halt on the left-hand side of her bed.

"Please make it stop! Please."

"How did this happen, Abigail? You have your suppressants."

"Forgot because of my cold."

Oh, so sheer dumb luck and absent-mindedness had caused this. Yes, that seemed reasonable. However, Hannibal nor Will were Abigail's biological parents, so evolution's little trick of a child's pheromones repulsing their parents wouldn't work. This was why so many omegas struggled to be adopted, a single whiff of heat could send the alpha into rut and turn the omega territorial. Of course Hannibal was made of sterner stuff, but he had no wish to cause Will unnecessary trauma. So, decision made because there wasn't anything to stop her heat now, Hannibal lifted Abigail into his arms and carried her down to the garage where he sat her in the passenger seat of the Bentley.

Poor girl would start burning up soon if she wasn't exposed to an alpha, and Hannibal would *not* let that alpha be him. Hannibal returned to grab some shoes, then pulled out of the garage and drove through the night toward Anders' apartment. He called the blond to explain the situation as he drove and that, while he wasn't exactly happy with this turn of events, Anders was Abigail's intended mate. Naturally, Hannibal would have preferred Abigail to finish school before mating, but she was of legal age and couldn't be forced to suffer through her heat alone when she didn't need to.

He drove carefully knowing any suddenly jolts would only cause Abigail further discomfort and pain. Abigail wouldn't stop moving, kept squirming and floundering about, throwing her pheromones around the vehicle without even realizing it to the point Hannibal had rolled the windows down. Throughout the whole drive, Hannibal continuously muttered sweet comforts to

her; his alpha voice being the only way he'd allow himself to relief Abigail's discomfort. It seemed to provide some small modicum of aid, but her scent strengthened by the second and, while not breaking his resolve, Hannibal could smell nothing else.

When he turned a corner Abigail's brown eyes flew open as she wined: "Hannibal!"

That had the alpha raise an eyebrow, he'd never wanted to hear her moan his name like that and Abigail probably wasn't even aware she had. Had it come from will he'd have had a lap full of mate by now, but hearing it from Abigail disgusted him. She leaned toward him and Hannibal pushed her right back into her seat. Logical thought had started to abandon her in favor of letting heat take over.

Anders had already had his apartment door open when Hannibal finally arrived and got Abigail up the stairs. It wasn't as luxurious as Hannibal's house, but it sure as hell wasn't the sort of place most students lived; at least three times the size and Anders had it all to himself. He'd lost both parents in that car crash, but at least he'd been left his trust fund to support himself.

Hannibal easily passed Abigail over to Anders' arms where she instantly snuggled into him. Had the situation been less serious, Anders might have even laughed at Hannibal's casual appearance.

"Forgive the abruptness of all this, Anders, but she said she'd forgotten to take her suppressants due to her cold. This isn't how things were intended to go, but we must all adapt."

"I'll take care of her, I promise. I'll be a good mate."

"See that you are."

Hannibal wasn't the sort to give the old 'hurt my daughter and I'll kill you' line, but the coldness in Hannibal's words had gotten the message across entirely. Fellow serial killer or not, Hannibal would dice him into tiny chunks and use him to feed Winston and Beau for a month if Anders ever harmed Abigail.

Returning home had been a cold journey as Hannibal had rolled all the windows down to aerate his Bentley but he'd not complained, just been thankful for the fresh air and enjoyed the silence. Once he'd gotten home he flicked off the lights before returning to his bed for some much needed sleep. However, the moment he cracked the door open Will grabbed him and shoved him against the wall with a level of force most didn't think an omega capable of. The younger man growled territorially and ribbed his scent gland against his mate in a desperate attempt to banish the smell of Abigail which lingered on Hannibal's skin.

"Shush," the alpha soothed. "Everything is all right. Abigail is now with Anders and I am, as always, entirely yours."

"Mine!" Will hissed before burring his teeth in Hannibal's neck deep enough too draw rich crimson forth and have Hannibal swirl with pleasure. "Mine!"

Territorial wasn't something Hannibal had ever seen from Will before, certainly not to such an extent. That said, he found he rather liked it. Pain stung in his neck as Will scratched and clawed and yanked at his sweater in a desperate attempt to banish the scent of an invading omega. Hannibal just smiled lovingly.

"I love you, Will."

Shirtless, he lifted the beautiful omega into his arms and carried him to bed. They required no foreplay or gentleness, this wasn't lovemaking but rather primal fucking. Will bit and scratched, Hannibal bruised the younger man's wrists as they kissed. Will's scent flooded his senses; their kiss wasn't innocent more like a tease, hot, fiery, passionate and demanding.

"My perfect omega."

"Fuck me!"

A demanding omega, but still a perfect one. Hannibal's lips found Will's neck then to lavish his mating bite with open-mouthed kisses and nibbles until he finally filled the younger man, forced him onto his stomach where Will happily presented for him. Will's warmth invited Hannibal in with moans of delight. So deep, so forceful, yet Will wouldn't have changed it for the world. Hannibal was *his* alpha. Tomorrow, when logic had merged once more with his brain, Will would think his reaction a little excessive, of course he knew nothing would ever happen between Hannibal and Abigail, but logic wasn't there at that moment.

Hannibal wasn't gentle, not that Will had wanted him to be, he set a fast pace that bordered on the line between pain and pleasure, a pace which had Will moaning into the mattress and clawing the sheets while Hannibal teased his mating bite – oh if only he could be mated again.

"Alpha!" Cried Will when he finally came, when he tumbled off that cliff into the euphoric waters below with his mate right behind him.

The early hours of the morning and his eldest daughter had unexpectedly gone into heat, Will should have been concerned for her but instead drifted off to sleep sated and knowing he was the only omega to linger on his alpha. They belonged to one another and would even after the Reaper finally caught up with the.

~X~

Hannibal awoke the following morning with Will ensnared in his arms; the omega was warm, smelt of sex and Hannibal himself. For several moments he just lay there listening to the quiet which meant the twins and Sebastian were all still fast asleep. Quiet had been in short supply since the twins had been born, of course he loved his pups and mate, but Hannibal still urged for those solitary moments that only really showed themselves in between patients and post kill. Maroon eyes gazed at his mate a moment as he made mental note to draw him sometime soon and delighted in the scent of sex which faintly lingered in the bedroom. Oh, if only he could cancel his patients for the day to simply languish in bed with Will.

"Don't pretend to be asleep, Will, it's rude."

Hannibal had noticed Will's breathing change the second he'd woken, so it wasn't any surprise the act hadn't lasted long. Will gave up the act and sleepily rolled onto his side to flash those beautiful baby blues of his, a tiny smile on his lips as he stretched up to kiss the man he loved; a much gentler brush of lips than the previous night's bruising kisses. A monster by many people's standards, but he would always be Will's monster.

"I'm sorry I basically jumped you last night. I got a bit territorial there." A 'bit' might have been something of an understatement. "How is Abigail?"

"You're actions last night were perfectly understandable, Will. You are an omega that loves your alpha, yet woke to my absence and the heat of another omega. Then, when I returned, I smelt of that omega, of course you felt threatened. I told you last night and I shall tell you again: I am always yours, mylimasis. Also, I greatly enjoyed you being territorial." He paused a moment to kiss Will's forehead. "As for Abigail, she is perfectly fine. Anders will take good care of her as her mate."

"It's official then," Will sighed. "We have a son-in-law and I feel old."

Hannibal breathed out a small laugh. "If you feel old, how do you suppose I feel?"

Quickly Will moved to straddle his alpha, his smooth chest pressed to Hannibal's hairier one, then kissed him deeply; the sort of heated kiss which had Hannibal grip Will's hips to keep him close. Their own enduring ancient language unlike those that rarely survived.

"After the way you fucked me last night, there's no way I'll believe you're old, Hannibal."

"I appreciate the complement." Another kiss found its way to Will's lips. "I have rather a lot of appointments today, but I can take you to the House to spend some time with Beverly and the others if you like. It will give the house a chance to air out."

Will nodded. "The twins have been asking to see their Aunt Beverly."

"Then I'll drive you, I'm sure Winston and Beau will enjoy running around the woods as well. Would you like to shower with me first."

A smirk was the only response he got, but it was enough to have Hannibal lift Will up in those strong arms of his and carried him into the spacious bathroom.

~X~

Hannibal had come to the conclusion he'd been somewhat neglecting the House since Sebastian's birth, but had trusted Barney, Price and Dolarhyde to watch over the place in his absence. So, in the early evening after he'd finished with his patients, Hannibal had driven up to the House in his Land Rover to check in and collect his family.

The House's main door buzzed loudly a moment before Hannibal was granted entrance. Where before had been peeling green paint and a rusted reception desk, now walls were clean and white, plants had been littered around to lighten the place up and a new reception desk of light wood had stood proudly with Omega Lives written in a delicate calligraphy style on the wall behind it. Alana and Hannibal had been extremely careful as to whom they allowed into the building, a halfway house for Omega Lives was essentially just a front for providing survivors of the House a place to live, that said, whitewashing the place had done everybody's mental state good.

"Afternoon, Doctor Lecter." Dolarhyde greeted from his position stood behind the desk.

"Hello, Francis. Thank you for letting me in, but I would have used my keycard."

Dolarhyde shrugged. "Saw you pull up on the cameras."

Since Reba had chosen to stay at the House a while, Dolarhyde had basically moved in and never left. As expected, having a schizophrenic alpha as a permanent fixture hadn't been well received at first, however, as time had gone on and Dolarhyde had shown no signs of going of his meds, he'd steadily been warmed up to. Without the Dragon constantly muttering to him, his relationship with Reba had begun to blossom and the other omegas and begun viewing him as something between a guard dog and Hannibal's second-in-command. Speaking of dogs, Beau suddenly appeared from the stairs and bounded over to Hannibal eager for attention. His tail wagged as he bounced up on his hind legs – training for the pup hadn't fully taken root just yet – then rushed off back upstairs to where Will and his family would surely be.

"Anything happen I should know about, Francis?"

Dolarhyde shook his head slowly. "No. Barney's making dinner if you want to join."

"While he does have a surprisingly excellent palette, that will not be necessary."

"D?" Two sets of eyes flashed over to the library to see Reba stood in the doorway. "Someone moved my book, could you find it for me, please?"

It hadn't seemed right in Dolarhyde's mind for everyone to have access to books, television and other entertainments while Reba had been left carefully learning the layout of her new home, so, in one of the few brief times he'd left the House, Dolarhyde had bought books in Braille, a selection of CDs and an old stereo, as well as little textured stickers that had been dotted around to help Reba find her way until she'd committed it to memory.

With a nod and vague 'uh-huh' sound, Dolarhyde had made for the library. While he'd not said it and surely wouldn't, Hannibal had found himself proud of his fellow serial killer. Dolarhyde had come on in leaps and bounds now he had medication, a routine and genuine affection. The Tooth Fairy wouldn't ever stop killing, but Hannibal wouldn't force a man to give up his art.

Two at a time Hannibal ascended the stairs towards Beverly's room because he knew that was where he'd find them all. Sure enough he found Will chatting with Beverly on the bed rocking Sebastian while the twins played on the floor with the dogs. As soon as Veronique spotted him she rushed to be lifted into Hannibal's arms like the papa's girl she was.

"Love you, Papa."

"And I love you, darling girl." Hannibal kissed her cheek. "Have you been having fun with your Aunt Beverly?"

Veronique nodded. "She read us a story when Daddy went to stop Sebas crying, and we played outside with Winston and Beau."

Yes, Hannibal could tell the dogs had been enjoying the woods by the way they were desperate for a bath. Perhaps a pet washing station was something he needed to at to his home in the near future.

"Can we go home, Papa?" Maroon eyes flashed down to Claude.

Only a boy of four and yet he was both handsome and refined like Hannibal; he'd also taken to Lithuanian far more naturally than Veronique had. Will had taken to teasing his mate that Claude would be wearing three piece suits and cooking simple meals by the time he was six.

With another kiss, Hannibal set Veronique down and nodded to his first born. "I must speak with Alana and then we shall go home. Will you and your sister decided what you'd like for dinner, I'm afraid I've not thought of anything."

The twins were quick to nod while Will just smiled at him. Hannibal almost permanently had a menu floating around inside his mind but the twins had gotten their palette from their papa. Sure, they might not have learned all the correct terminology – what Will called 'fancy words' – for things, but they knew what they liked and weren't ever fussy about food. That and thinking would keep them occupied for a little longer.

"Alana is in her office, Hannibal." He went to his mate with a snoozing Sebastian in his arms for a kiss. "Have you heard from Abigail?"

"I received a message from Anders a few hours ago. Abigail is perfectly fine, they're mated and her heat is under control."

"So it's true." The men's attention turned to Beverly. "Never thought Abigail would get herself a mate – I mean, not that she shouldn't, of course. I just didn't think she wanted one is all. She seemed more focused on her education as far as I could tell."

That was true, education was something Abigail had thrown herself into as a way to ground herself and tiptoe back into the world. However, what Beverly wouldn't ever know was just how well Anders slotted into her family. Just as Hannibal was to Will, Anders was Abigail's perfect mate and something which couldn't be ignored. Had it not been for that cold, Abigail would have been content to wait a few years to mate with Anders, but fate had obviously intervened.

"One should never underestimate, Abigail." Hannibal concluded before brushing a large hand over Sebastian's soft baby hair. "Has he been good for his daddy?"

Will smiled. "He had a crying fit earlier, but he's happy again now. I think it's all the new smells here, they overwhelmed him. Sebastian might even have your gift. I'm sure he just wants to go home and sleep in his crib now."

That could be very easily arranged once he'd spoken to Alana. So, not wanting to keep his family waiting any longer than they needed to, Hannibal excused himself and made for Alana's office. She'd seemed happy to see him though he'd suspected that had something to do with the stack of paperwork she'd been going over for the rest of the charity more than his charming company. Turned out that having Dolarhyde around had been a god send for the House as much of the daily management had been left in his surprisingly capable hands. Price and the other remaining betas had unofficially acknowledged him as in charge when Hannibal himself wasn't around allowing Alana to get on with other things; Hannibal's second-in-command indeed. Inspections and curiosity about the House had finally died down as well which was fortuitous for all involved. Then there were the renovations which had been off and on for the last few years, they'd finally come to an end. The House was again structurally sound, windows had been added and the black mould they'd found in the basement had been cleaned out; hell, they'd even got wifi. Fern's garden had become more of a community project which seemed to keep the omegas mentally active and getting fresh air. Alana had even shown interest in encouraging them getting back into education or finding part-

time employment to further promote independence and the rejoining of society; Hannibal took no issue with that, frankly he approved.

Becoming overseer of the House truly wasn't something he'd wanted, but couldn't turn his back on the place now, not when Will had friends he cared about there. So, as much as he'd rather not have continued to bother with the House, he'd ensure the people there got all the help they needed.

Chapter 8

After Anders' and Abigail's mating something had happened that Abigail herself had been surprised about; she'd told Anders the truth. Part of her had worried he'd accuse her of misleading him when she told him she wasn't a virgin, but Anders couldn't have cared less about that; no, it was *why* she wasn't a virgin that had flooded him with anger. She'd opened up about the House, about Jack and her biological father being the Minnesota Shrike, about how Will had tried to take care of her while held captive, and eventually of how Hannibal had infiltrated the House to kill and cook their jailers. While Anders' respect for Hannibal and Will had rocketed to new heights, there had been lingering anger he'd not been there to help. It wasn't until Anders had realized his mate had just shared her family's deepest secret with him, that she'd shared the darkest part of her life with him, that he'd calmed down and chosen to be grateful. There wasn't anything he could have done, he'd not even known them back then. Fingers itched to cut, slaughter and punish those who'd hurt Abigail, but Hannibal had already seen to that revenge.

Instead of blowing up in anger or digging up corpses just to slap them, Anders had instead gotten involved with Omega Lives and the House himself. Alana had been happy for the help and being mated to Abigail had made the omega residents more inclined to trust him. Meeting Dolarhyde had certainly been a memorable moment. Three serial killers running a omega haven in the woods of Wolf Trap, it sounded like a bad joke. Of course, as well as building his reputation with Johns Hopkins and his peers, but mentally solidified his place within the Lecter pack. Hannibal hadn't ever termed it like that, but their murder family was a pack and armed with powerful alphas. He'd been alone for so long, felt isolated because of who he was at heart, but he didn't have to hide a single bloody fragment of himself any longer because he was finally among kindred. In Anders' mind, omegas were the most perfect things to have exist and something to be treasured. Most treated them like horny weaklings so desperate to be bred that they honestly couldn't think of anything else; baby birds to stupid and naïve to care for themselves or hold any real responsibility. That damn driver had blamed his own failings on Anders' mother just because she'd been an omega, and people had gone along with it. Meeting Hannibal had been wonderful because he'd shared Anders' opinion. The House had been a place of total horror, cruelty and violence, but Hannibal had ended that and Anders could see it being a true haven. Yes, he'd thrown himself into helping at the House because it was just another way of keeping omegas safe and changing the way people treated them.

Will jolted Anders out of his internal thoughts then and back to the world around him, he'd been waiting for Abigail to return from wherever she'd wandered off to and found himself staring at Fern's little garden while Beau and Winston had rushed around in the leaves.

"Everything all right, Anders?" Will asked as he shuffled Sebastian in his arms to look at his watch. "It's 4:36pm. you are in Wolf Trap, Virginia. Your name is Anders Corvene."

That had the blond's brow furrow. "Excuse me?"

"Sorry. It's something Hannibal started doing for me. It helps ground me when I have nightmares or vanish too far into my mind." Ah, so Anders had looked vacant. "Are you okay?"

"Yes," he nodded. "I was just thinking about this place, about how omegas need more places they can be safe. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to suggest you're weak."

Will huffed out a laugh. "I know you didn't. You're right though. Alphas used to be top dog. Back in the days of cavemen they were the dominant ones, the protectors, the hunters and omegas had the pups, we ensured the next generation was healthy. So, we aren't weak, we're just strong in a different way. You know, sometimes I think betas evolved as a way for nature to simplify humanity, but then it realized it's mistake and backpeddled as best it could. No mating bond, no scent awareness, it seems so bland. True, it certainly isn't easy being an omega, but to just be married to Hannibal instead of sharing our mating bond would be so flat. Hell, he probably wouldn't have even wanted me, male betas can't birth pups."

"Oh, I think Doctor Lecter would love you no matter what or who you are. The night he told me he knew I am the Flag Killer he said: 'I have little preference for dynamic or gender' , so he'd always love you."

Will hadn't expected hearing that to warm his heart so. Of course Hannibal would love him no matter what, their love hadn't come from Will's dynamic or his appearance, it was all from the understanding they shared of one another – a bond within a bond. Regardless, it was nice to hear.

"Speaking of love, Abigail seems happy. I know we'd wanted her to be a bit older before mating, but she does seem happy."

"I'm glad she is."

Even Anders had thought it a bit early, but this was what fate had decided for them and he'd not argue. He just hoped he could make her as happy as she deserved, as happy as Hannibal made Will. As her alpha he was well within his rights to pluck her out of Hannibal's home and insist she live with him, but Anders wouldn't take her from her home. No, he'd wait until she'd finished school and was a bit older just like Hannibal had wanted because the man wasn't wrong.

Sebastian shuffled in Will's arms then, stretched his little hands out and smiled up at his daddy sweetly. One day he and Abigail would have their own pup and he hoped to see those little smiles directed at her.

"Would you like to hold him?"

While Anders had acknowledged Hannibal as his pack alpha, he'd never so much as petted one of Abigail's siblings on the head; hadn't thought it his place. So, when Sebastian – or Sebas to the twins – was placed in his arms Anders found himself feeling rather honored. He was heavier than Anders had imagined, for some reason he'd just assumed a boy of only a handful of months to weigh next to nothing. Just as with Claude, Sebastian would be the spitting image of Hannibal and he found himself wondering if his own pup would resemble himself or Abigail more. His aunt had always done her best for Anders, but she'd never really been mother material nor could she have replaced his mother if she'd tried. He'd always be grateful for the shelter and care she'd given him, of course he'd always be grateful for that, but the Lecters were his family, the Lecters were his pack.

~X~

That filthy little rat hadn't been seen anywhere in months as far as Marcus could tell. He'd sent out word he wanted Dolarhyde found but nothing useful had come of it. Breaking back into Maryland's trade had been most of Marcus' goal but there had also been revenge. Fierce, violent revenge. Dolarhyde and Co had made a fool of him and his empire, a mockery that Marcus wouldn't let go unpunished. He didn't care how long it took, he'd have them tracked down and castrated for what they'd done, what they'd had the audacity to do. The sooner would obviously be more preferable, but he could be a patient man.

Having checked in with Kett regarding the handful of new omegas he'd acquired, Marcus grabbed his tablet and began to look through the news. It never hurt to keep up to date on what was going on around him. All of Maryland's favorite serial killers had struck again; the Chesapeake Ripper had gutted two poor fuckers and left him strung up like the Vitruvian Man. The Flag Killer had skinned yet another man and left him inside a nightclub which had puzzled everybody. Then there was the Tooth Fairy who'd annihilated a family of five over in Bowie which had seriously damaged that family-friendly vibe. Marcus didn't much care, people died all the time and serial killers were everywhere these days. Freddie Lounds had written an amusing piece about the trio though; she'd gone so far as to suggest the Chesapeake Ripper had become a ringleader.

He saw it then as he flicked through another news site, a little fluff piece on a new halfway house set up by the Omega Lives charity. That wasn't any old building, that was the House and stood outside among the faces was the man who'd worn a fancy suit to slaughter and burn his empire.

"Doctor Hannibal Lecter, is that who you are?"

He howled with laughter. This Doctor Lecter had ripped down everything Jack had built and flipped it into a place of safety for omegas, then he'd come for Marcus. Oh, it was practically comical. An alpha had killed so many and destroyed so much just to protect some dumb little omegas. He didn't see Dolarhyde or that beta in the picture, but at least he'd gotten a lead. While anger and rage screamed at Marcus to drive over there and shoot the place up like an old gangster film, he resisted. Dolarhyde was dangerous, there wasn't any escaping that. The beta wouldn't be much of a problem and could be dealt with whenever. However, the alpha in the plastic suit – no, Hannibal Lecter, was a disturbingly efficient killer that Marcus wisely chose to be cautious of. He knew where a third of them were now and had plenty of time to form a plan nobody could wriggle out of.

"Don't tell me you assholes did all this for some fucking omegas. Why bother? They're just needy holes desperate to be filled."

An idea struck him then. What if this fancy looking doctor had taken over Jack's operation then twisted it for himself and now used the front of Omega Lives to explain the constant movement of merchandise in and out of a rural location? What if there hadn't been any morality or kindness for the souls at the Madison-May, they'd just wanted to shove him out and take over his business? Yes, that made much more sense in Marcus' mind, that would explain how Dolarhyde had turned on him so easily as well, Lecter must have offered more money. If all of this boiled down to business then Marcus could win fairly easily, he just had to be quiet about it. So that was what he'd do, gather information and lay in wait to jump out and snap his enemy's neck. If Hannibal Lecter thought he could take over the omega trafficking within Maryland, he had another thing coming.

~X~

While a very real possibility that Hannibal had somewhat expected to have to deal with eventually, he'd have rather Will hadn't been involved; rather Will hadn't needed to suffer. Keeping the secret of what had happened at the House might have been simple for Hannibal, but not for the omegas who'd chosen to leave after that night. He'd kept a close eye on them, acted as their therapist to gauge their mental states and keep himself informed of if something like this was brewing.

Guilt was a powerful emotion, one that ate young Kimberly alive from the inside. Beyond the Omega Lives one-on-one therapy meetings, Hannibal hadn't had anything to do with her; an omega of twenty-four who'd been at the House for about three years before Jack's death was about all he knew. However, that she felt an increasing need to confess what had happened and how she'd just allowed so many people to be tossed into a mass grave somewhere, was a realization Hannibal had come to before she fully had.

Of course killing her was the best, simplest and nicest thing to do; she'd have been freed from her guilt, while Hannibal would have protected the House, his mate and himself. Yet, Will had known about all of it because she'd blurted it out one afternoon when they'd stumbled across one another at Hannibal's office. He did a good job of keeping it off his face, but Hannibal saw the alarm bells and tug of war that went on inside Will's mind. Will might have had all the same thoughts as himself, but Kimberly was his friend and a survivor just like himself.

"Let's sit and talk about this."

Unsure of if Will would actually be able to dissuade her going to the police – not that Hannibal would let such a liability wander around – he welcomed her back inside to sit down. Gaslighting her was always an option, he could just drive her insane and be done with it, but that was a drawn-out thing that again would have hurt Will.

"… I – I know why you did what you did and I'm thankful for you freeing us. You're the only one who cared enough to actually do something." She fidgeted with her hands in her lap as tears began to stain her face. Hannibal remained deathly silent, just a fly on the wall while Will attempted a solution where nobody died or got driven mad. "But… so many people died! Terrible people, but still people. Their families don't know where they are and they don't know what they did. Jack gets to stay a respected man – why should he get that?!"

Will flashed a calming smile. "They might not get the public destruction they deserved, but they're gone and can't hurt anyone now. We're safe. You didn't do anything wrong, not for a single second."

"But I went along with it. We *all* just went along with it. My dad keeps going on about how brave I was, how strong I was, but all I did was cower and obey. Sometimes -" She cut herself off a moment with a deep sigh. When Kimberly spoke again it was in a defeated tone. "I don't want to be in this world anymore."

The mates shared a calm look before Hannibal quietly rose to his feet and made his way over to his desk. Meanwhile, Will took Kimberly's hands into his own and crouched down beside her.

"Nobody said carrying on would be easy," he confessed. "Murder doesn't seem like the answer even when it's justified, does it?" That was a barefaced lie if ever Hannibal had heard one. Will might have pretended, but he thrived on death just as Hannibal did. "It had to be done to keep everyone safe though, the story Hannibal and Alana came up with is to keep us all safe as well. How-"

She cut him off abruptly as she pulled her hands back. "No. Will, you're my friend and Hannibal's your mate, but he could have gone to the police. Journalists could have made the world look at what was happening. I – I can't keep it secret. I don't want to. I see their faces at night. They blame me for doing nothing. They're ghosts! I *have* to tell someone. They -"

Whatever else Kimberly had wanted to say was stopped in its tracks when Hannibal thrust a needle into her neck from behind; that man could move like a shadow when he wanted. Eyes flashed with fear then slipped shut as Kimberly slumped in her chair.

"She's going to give us away, Will." Hannibal reasoned softly. "You heard her, she doesn't want to live any longer and she is going to inform the police."

"I know!" Will snapped without meaning to. Blue eyes remained on Kimberly as he tried to calm his breaths. "I know and you're right. I just – I just …"

"It is perfectly understandable that you wish to keep all your friends safe even after they leave the House. You took the risk of escaping, fleeing in the snow and ice, to give them a chance. To kill one of them after all that is no easy thing. However, if she goes to the police, everyone will be in danger rather than just Kimberly."

Will breathed out a laugh as he rose to his feet. "So the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, is that it?"

To be perfectly honest, that was exactly what it was, yet Hannibal chose to phrase it differently. "Perhaps not outweigh, she has needs as well. Kimberly is being eaten away from the inside and no amount of therapy is going to help her now she's let it consume her. Even if she did tell the police what really happened that night, the guilt wouldn't leave her. Kimberly is suicidal, maybe this time it is kinder to let her go than attempt gluing her back together."

Those lovely blue eyes turned to Hannibal. "Sometimes you sounding so damn reasonable about everything is annoying."

Hannibal smirked that little smirk of his; a wink from the monster under the mask. "You saying we should argue more often? Screaming at one another seems a touch too uncouth."

"Would probably lead to good makeup sex though."

With Will having calmed, they turned their attention back to dealing with the drugged omega. Will wouldn't allow her to suffer and Hannibal had zero intentions of making her another Chesapeake Ripper victim; the fridge was fully stocked. In the end they opted for staging a suicide by hanging. Carefully she'd been transported to her home knowing there weren't any cameras and her father would be at work for hours to come, then they'd suspended her in the garage while the drugs kept her sedated. Hanging wasn't a pretty way to go, but at least unconsciousness meant she'd felt no pain; hadn't even known what was happening. An autopsy would be unlikely to show the chemicals in her system, Hannibal had made sure to use a sedative which would vanish from the bloodstream quickly, and everyone knew Kimberly hadn't been adjusting well. Hannibal had dealt with the latest threat to his family while Will and managed to keep her from suffering as much as possible.

A few doctored notes in Hannibal's records and the fact Alana had already been concerned about her would be more than enough to list the cause of death as suicide. The mates had made one serious agreement though: Never tell Abigail what had really happened.

Chapter 9

What Hannibal had intended on being a quiet afternoon where he got to return to his mate early for a change, had abruptly been transformed into carefully choosing is words so as to both assist and give nothing of help to Special Agent McCoy. How Anders' last kill had been left inside a nightclub full of cameras without any of them seeing anything had not only infuriated him, but made him look incompetent to his superiors. Frustration had started to wreak havoc with his mind, had him ready to kick in every door in the state to do an illegal search for anything connecting to the Flag Killer. So, Hannibal had smiled and offered the man a seat, had calmly retold him everything he'd said before learning who Anders was but in a different fashion to make it sound new. It hadn't taken more than two minutes to decided to message Will informing him he'd be late leaving the office. In McCoy's mind, Hannibal was a gilded font of knowledge at his personal disposal, a soothsayer who'd guide him to the Flag Killer's door. Although, while Hannibal had originally been content to occasionally provide insight to another murderer's kills, he'd certainly not jeopardize his daughter's mate or her relationship with him. No, he'd continue being polite and playing helpful until McCoy was either pulled off the case or just stopped darkening Hannibal's doorway.

"I'm afraid I'm not a forensic computer analyst, I can't explain how he avoided those cameras. What I can tell you is that the Flag Killer has a point to make and leaving a body in the centre of a normally happy place is his way of doing it."

"Yeah, yeah." McCoy sighed from his seat opposite Hannibal's desk. "He's punishing them for their crimes."

A knock sounded on the door then so Hannibal politely excused himself and crossed the room to admit Anders; probably poor timing. He held a few books in one arm and had a satchel over his shoulder.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Doctor Lecter, I didn't realize you were still with patients."

"You're my son-in-law, I think it's high time you called me Hannibal. Please, come in." He gestured to the tired alpha at his desk. "This is Special Agent Michael McCoy, he's consulting me on the Flag Killer." That had gray eyes flick to Hannibal questioningly a moment before his mask fell back into place. "Agent McCoy, this is my daughter's mate Anders Corvene."

Anders set his books down on Hannibal's desk and slipped off his satchel before he shook the hand of the agent after him. The serial killers had this man outnumbered now and he hadn't even realized it.

"That's a lot of medical books."

Gray eyes glanced at them a moment. "Yes, I'm at Johns Hopkins. I actually came by to ask if Doct- Hannibal would be kind enough to loan me some of his anatomy books. Apparently he has a rather lovely collection of rarer ones."

Hannibal saw no problem with loaning some books out and easily gestured to the ladder which led up to the mezzanine. "By all means, Anders, do help yourself."

With thanks Anders made his way up the ladder and out of sight while Hannibal moved the satchel from the floor to one of the blue chairs in the office's centre. Meanwhile, curiosity had McCoy pull

the topmost book from the pile Anders had placed on the desk. Torture. Why would a hopeful doctor have such a detailed book on torture techniques? His brow furrowed deeply as he flicked through only to stop when the pages became riddled with annotations and notes, then they widened and glanced up to the mezzanine to ensure Anders hadn't seen him. McCoy gulped, returned the book then quickly but quietly approached Hannibal. He caught the taller man by the arm and tugged him further away from the mezzanine so they'd not be overheard.

"Is everything all right, Agent McCoy?" Hannibal asked as he straightened the creases from his sleeve.

"Em, Doctor Lecter, I don't wish to alarm you, but I'm fairly certain *he's* the Flag Killer."

Hannibal cocked an eyebrow. McCoy may not have been wrong, but he did wonder how the man had so suddenly realized it. Of course, none of that flashed across his face, instead Hannibal made a puzzled expression and whispered quietly.

"There must be some mistake, why would you think such a thing? Anders is my son-in-law."

"I know he is. I know that and I'm sorry, but he has a book full of notes on flaying. He's filled the margins with reminders for how deep to cut. You said our man was a highly intelligent alpha who's a medical student. Anders Corvene is a highly intelligent alpha who's a medical student and he's got a how-to manual on skinning people."

Yes, Hannibal couldn't really argue with the federal agent, not when everything he'd said was accurate. Still, he went into damage control mode easily enough.

"Anders is a curious man, he knows I've been consulting and probably wished to help in any way he could. I'm sure there is a very simple explanation for all of this. How about we just talk to him and clear it all up?"

Reluctantly McCoy sighed with a nod. All of this seemed like far too much of a coincidence to not be connected, but Hannibal was a smart man and McCoy wanted to give the man's family the benefit of the doubt. They'd talk to him, if it turned out there was a simple answer then great, if there was something darker they'd deal with it when they crossed that bridge.

McCoy spun around as Anders descended the ladder with two books in his arms. He flashed a pleasant smile but clearly took instant notice of the conspiratorial huddle McCoy had drug Hannibal into.

"Everything all right, Agent McCoy? I can leave if I'm interrupting your consultation."

"I just want to talk to you about something, lad. You see-"

In an instant Hannibal had grabbed him from behind and begun choking him out slowly while Anders stared in shock. He didn't drop the books, didn't rush to help McCoy, just watched as Hannibal expertly choked a man.

"You're book gave you away, Anders." Hannibal informed as McCoy's eyes started to flutter. "He knows you're the Flag Killer."

Rendering someone unconscious took longer than most presumed, so Hannibal stood there for several moments with an unrelenting grip while Anders set the books aside and slowly approached.

McCoy struggled, by God did he struggle, but he stood no chance against Hannibal. When he made a last-ditch effort to grab his weapon, Anders snatched it away swiftly enough.

"I'm sorry about this, Hannibal. I didn't mean to involve you."

"Quite all right, Anders, we're all serial killers here. Besides, mistakes are teachable moments."

With that, McCoy finally slipped into unconsciousness and Hannibal carefully lowered him down to the floor between them. The two killers looked at McCoy a moment unsure what to do with him.

"I could call D?" Anders suggested. "He has that black minivan."

"Francis' involvement will not be required. Believe it or not, I once had a similar encounter with Miriam Lass."

"The girl at the House with one arm?" Hannibal nodded in confirmation. "So that's how she wound up so conditioned by you."

He'd planned on using Miriam to taunt law enforcement once upon a time, but that plan had been cancelled a long time ago. She was much more use at the House now so there she'd remain. Meanwhile, McCoy wouldn't make for a very good taunt and killing him hadn't been planned in the slightest. Killing him would likely be the easiest thing to do as well as the simplest. With McCoy gone a new agent would be assigned but they'd not get Hannibal's assistance nor would they stumble across Anders' books. So, with a few orders from his pack alpha, Anders had set about moving McCoy's vehicle to somewhere it wouldn't be noticed a while and creating the idea he'd left Hannibal's office hours before he'd been killed. While Anders had done that, Hannibal had bound McCoy, lightly sedated him for the journey, and driven him over to his house on the cliffs for some privacy.

It had been some time since Hannibal had been there, he'd bought it a long time ago before he'd become a psychiatrist and just never sold it on. Now the children were older he'd maybe bring his family out for a weekend. They could look out at the ocean and enjoy a little vacation now and then. For the time being it would serve as McCoy's prison.

Upon arriving, Hannibal had hauled McCoy down to the basement where he'd bound him to a table to await Anders. Killing McCoy really hadn't been on his list of things to do but needs must and all that. Hannibal removed his suit jacket and waistcoat then placed them neatly over a chair looking out over the vast cliffs. Yes, he really would have to bring the children here sooner or later.

With time to kill until Anders arrived or McCoy awoke, Hannibal decided to treat himself to a nice glass of red and stare out at that view. Should he turn his accidental victim into something beautiful and artistic, or let him simply linger on a list of missing persons? While the latter would likely be simpler in the long run and avoid riling up whichever agent took over the Flag Killer case. Although, Hannibal had an idea for a homage to Anders' work which he didn't want to waste. Freddie Lounds had made several allegations that the Chesapeake Ripper had teamed up with the Flag Killer to murder which was, of course, false, but maybe this once they'd let her be right about something.

Eventually Anders arrived and Hannibal admitted him to the house which was promptly complemented for its elegant modernism.

"Thank you, Anders. Please, follow me." Anders didn't need telling twice, he just trailed after the older alpha down to the basement where their victim had finally regained consciousness. "I'm glad to see you awake, Agent McCoy. You'll have to forgive our rude treatment of you. Regrettably, you have forced our hands."

"The fuck is this? Have you known it's him the whole time?!"

"Please do not yell, it is uncouth. To answer your question: No, when you first came to consult me I didn't even know Anders. I figured him out shortly afterwards though. My daughter has only just mated, she loves him very much and I shan't see her heart broken just because you wish to close a case."

McCoy gaped wide-eyed at Hannibal. He'd entrust a known serial killer with his pup? "You'll just let him keep killing to protect a reputation and some upset? Are you insane?!"

Hannibal smiled ever so slightly as Anders removed his jacket and rolled his sleeves up much as Hannibal had. "After so many years in psychiatry, I can tell you that everybody is a little insane. I have chosen to protect my pack not my reputation, that is merely a useful by-product."

Hannibal went to prepare his tools while Anders removed his own from his satchel. Honestly, the old saying that daughters married their fathers seemed alive an well because, looking at them, an outsider would have assumed Anders to be Hannibal's flesh and blood son rather than his son-in-law.

"Have you ever harmed an omega, Agent McCoy?"

"What? No. Just let me go. You don't need to do any of this. You only kill people who need punishing, right?" Anders nodded. "I don't. I've never abused or belittled an omega. This isn't how you kill. Hannibal, I don't know what's going through your head but you're a good man who knows right from wrong. Your daughter doesn't have to lose her mate, she'll have right to heat privileges. Just let me go and I'll help you all through this."

Hannibal spun around to regard McCoy a moment. Everything he'd said was logical and truthful, but they'd passed the point of no return back in his office several hours ago. Pleading wouldn't do anything to help McCoy now because he was appealing to a better nature neither killer had.

"I'm sorry, but you are going to die here. Best resign yourself to it, Agent McCoy."

Anders' brow furrowed. "Hannibal? He doesn't need punishing if he's never harmed an omega, so I'm disinclined to kill him. That said, I did create this mess and shove you into it, so I should clean it up." Out from his satchel came a glass vial and syringe which he promptly began to fill. "Normally I ensure my victims feel ever second of agony, that is their punishment after all, but you don't deserve that so I'll ensure you feel no pain."

"Wait." Gray eyes flashed up to Hannibal's intense maroon ones. "If you give him that then the meat will be ruined."

"Meat?!" McCoy felt sick as those maroon eyes turned to face the bound agent.

"Did it ever occur to you that the nod toward the Chesapeake Ripper's work displayed in the Flag Killers latest kills was because I had been teaching him?"

McCoy paled as the proverbial penny finally dropped. This was why Hannibal had been so totally unbothered by the fact his daughter had mated with a serial killer; he was one as well. It was a whole fucking family of murdering psychopaths.

Neither killer seemed bothered by McCoy's sudden horror, in fact they just turned back to their conversation over him.

"If not the painkillers and sedative, what would you recommend, Hannibal? Like I said, he doesn't deserve to suffer the agony of flaying."

"You are so used to ensuring your victims live through the process that you've failed to reach the simple answer, Anders. We just kill him now and then mutilate his body."

"No! Let me fucking go! You won't get-" Hannibal swiftly removed McCoy's tie and shoved it into his mouth to keep him quiet; screaming profanities wasn't needed.

"We shall simply sever his brainstem, death will follow shortly after. I propose you take his skin and craft your flag as you always do. If you'd be so kind, I'd like to take the rest of him."

Anders nodded. "That seems reasonable. I won't be displaying him as one of my kills, but I'll make the flag for you."

How two people could so calmly discuss the execution and subsequent mutilation of a federal agent as though they were discussing nothing more than where to go for lunch startled McCoy. However, he'd never get to fully ponder it as Hannibal swiftly took a blade and ended his life. Light faded from his eyes and McCoy soon departed for another realm.

With McCoy dead, Hannibal left Anders to his work and headed upstairs to contact Will and fill him in on everything that had happened and exactly why he'd be home so late. As expected, Will hadn't been too pleased to hear that McCoy choosing to alert Hannibal to his suspicions was the only thing to save their family, but he'd calmed down upon hearing McCoy had already passed. Anders had learned not to keep annotated textbooks on torture and Hannibal had restocked both his and the House's refrigerators, so all was again well. Will had even used the late night as an excuse to order one of those godawful pizzas Hannibal hated so much; Hannibal could only hope his twins took one look at it and insisted they had one their papa had prepared instead. Hell, Hannibal would have installed a proper pizza oven if Will hadn't kept stressing that the fact it was cheep and greasy was what made it good. Regardless, his mate and children were happy, he had fresh meat to cook with and the next morning the world would see his creation.

Some time after he'd left him, Hannibal returned to the basement to find Anders dumping his bloody gloves into the trash which would be burnt before they left. McCoy had been flayed and the skin set out in a neat single piece beside him.

"I must commend your skill, Anders, very impressive. Your hard work has paid off."

"Thank you. I owe most of it to you though. You're an exceptional teacher."

While not his protégé, Anders had been taken under the older alpha's wing where he'd learned a great deal of both the medical work and murdering world. Hannibal's talents with a scalpel were unmatched and had left Anders understanding that intelligence and memorizing textbooks never quite matched up to experience and natural skill.

With the flaying complete, Anders work was technically done and so he could leave, but Anders had wanted to remain just to see what art Hannibal had in mind. A homage to the Flag Killer was what Hannibal had alluded to, and it wasn't every day one got to see the infamous Chesapeake Ripper in action. So Anders watched, he sat and watched quietly as Hannibal turned the stereo on - *Un bel dí vedremo* – and set to work after a roll of his shoulders. With a truly amazing speed, Hannibal butchered McCoy down then set the bones to boil clean before he returned to properly prepare the meat. Only then did Anders fully understand the fundamental differences between his and Hannibal's kills, while he killed to punish and remove those who weren't fit to live from the world, Hannibal killed to eat and create his art. Yes, both were sadistic and enjoyed the power they held over others, but, when all was said and done, Hannibal was an artist while Anders was an executioner.

Chapter 10

Marcus stared at the latest Tattlecrime piece with those unforgiving eyes of his, especially the photographs Freddie Lounds had managed to snap and publish without any thought to family, friends or propriety. The Chesapeake Ripper had gotten hold of a federal agent this time and turned him into some kind of cholera illustration from the 1800s. The poor dead bastard and had been reduced to a skeleton then posed with his own skin in his bony hand; a powerful image, sickening to some and fascinating to others. Lounds had gone on to write that the Ripper and Killer must have been flirting with one another but the feds hadn't said anything on that side of things and Marcus had no time for serial killers. No, his time was better spent on tracking down everything he could on who Hannibal Lecter actually was and how he'd managed to bend Dolarhyde to his will so expertly; that crazy fucker had always been a glass cannon and difficult to predict, so taming such a beast was unfortunately impressive.

Most would probably call it stalking, but Marcus preferred to think of it as research; he was researching his enemies, or at least he'd sent Kett to do most of the legwork. After several weeks of loitering in the woods and on street corners like some cheep hooker, they'd finally gotten lucky because Kett had spotted Dolarhyde as he drove up to the House, and that was all he needed to confirm all his targets could be destroyed in a single blow. Jack's empire had been usurped by doctors and freaks, Marcus wouldn't let that go unpunished; not because he owed Jack anything or missed him, but because he was eager to burn all Hannibal Lecter had built down and repay the favor.

Hannibal Lecter, a well respected doctor by all accounts, a man of many talents including art and literature. A good, kind man who valued intellect and personal achievements over the position one's birth awarded them – made Marcus sick. This bastard had quite literally been born with a silver spoon in his mouth while he'd grown up dirt poor. 'Fucking bastard' had quickly become Marcus' preferred method of referring to him. Yet, underneath all the prim and proper elegance he portrayed, Hannibal Lecter was just as dark and bloody as Marcus himself. He'd gotten the better of Jack all because of an omega. No ass was good enough to slaughter that many people and tame a crackpot like Dolarhyde. Maybe Hannibal Lecter wasn't as smart as he pretended to be. Marcus should have known Will's escape would be the end of Jack, he'd been incapable of doing anything without Will; he'd been the House favorite after all. That damn omega had done well for himself, Marcus could admit that. Had found a rich alpha capable of brutally murdering when needed, Will had even popped out a few pups just to keep the alpha happy; a sound plan for any omega, let alone one who'd been in Will's position.

None of that mattered in the end though, Marcus would kill all of them and sell those pups to the highest paying perverts he could find. So focus on his task he had, focused so hard he'd developed unyielding headaches and snapped at his goons twice as much as usual. After a month Marcus had known everyone's routine: That Dolarhyde hardly ever left the House and when he did, it was late in the evening or early in the morning to avoid as many people as possible. How often the Lecters showed their faces and the security updates that had been made – fuck there were so many damn cameras these days.

A number of plans had gone through his mind to end his enemies; shooting up Dolarhyde's vehicle had been a popular one for a while, but there were too many outside factors to take into account and Dolarhyde surely would have been on high alert every time he stepped foot outside of the House. Then there was having Kett pose as a new patient and gunning Hannibal down when he

opened the door. However, one night they'd gotten lucky. Dolarhyde had gone out earlier than usual on one of his errand runs and Marcus had taken the chance. Why go to his targets when they could come to him?

~X~

With Hannibal's help, Reba had managed to come to terms with much of what she'd suffered since her kidnapping; she joked and smiled more, she'd made friends with the other omegas there and rather taken to the Lecter children. Although, the thing Dolarhyde most enjoyed was the closeness they'd formed. It had been awkward at first, felt a little like Stockholm Syndrome to him since he'd once been her jailer, but the connection was undeniable and surprisingly strong. They'd finally shared a kiss the previous week and the House had started to feel like home. Reba would likely want to leave eventually, but for the time being was happy to remain safely inside the House with the man who'd rescued her. Far from stupid was Reba, she knew he'd done bad things, that he had to have killed people to save her and the others, that Hannibal had as well, but nobody was truly innocent in the world and she'd begun to compartmentalize a little too efficiently. They saw one another for who they really were without shying away from the less pretty bits. There relationship wouldn't ever be perfect or smooth, but the bumpy bits existed to test its strength and Reba wanted them to be strong.

So, instead of pacing or hiding in her room as she had for the first few weeks after her rescue, Reba awaited Dolarhyde's return from picking up pizza and popcorn for them to watch a film together in the library. He'd gone out his way to ensure there were plenty of books she could actually read, so she'd plucked one at random to fill the time until he came back. Or, at least that was what she'd planned on doing. However, after only a couple of minutes, there was a loud thudding on the main door which startled her. When it came again, Reba set her book aside and padded to the reception desk where she called out for Price having expected him to be there at that time of the evening, only to remember he'd taken Brian to dinner and Barney was in the basement. Silence and a quick check of the chairs proved they were vacant, then that thudding came again. Slowly she searched out the intercom button and pushed it.

"Yes? Can I help?"

"Hurry up and let me in!" Dolarhyde commanded in a strange voice she played off as being muffled by the intercom. "Forgot my wallet."

Reba's brow furrowed, she was sure he'd said something about grabbing it from upstairs before he'd left and she couldn't quite understand why he was so grumpy all of a sudden. That said, it was raining heavily and he sometimes struggled with tone. As she pushed the release button Reba realized her mistake, Dolarhyde would have just used his keycard to enter like Hannibal and Price did. Forgetting a wallet was one thing, but those keycards never left their persons. In an instant men burst into the reception area bringing violence and rainy night air with them, and, more alarmingly, Dolarhyde wasn't among them. Rough hands grabbed her and duct tape was quickly wrapped around her mouth and eyes – whoever they were clearly hadn't realized she was blind – then someone threw her over their shoulder to haul her away. The first time she'd been kidnapped had been traumatic and terrifying, but the second time was worse because it made Reba feel like she'd

not learned some obvious lesson. As these people invaded the new home she'd made for herself she couldn't stop asking herself why that voice had sounded so much like Dolarhyde.

~X~

Grabbing pizza and popcorn for dinner had been Reba's idea, he'd not felt like going out in the rain but she'd asked so sweetly with that smile of hers that warmed his soul, so go in search of pizza he had. Dolarhyde's wallet had been retrieved from his small room before he'd told Price where he was going. Nobody had really been all that bothered. Price had been part of a small group playing poker upstairs while most of the others had been down in the basement playing boardgames. Game night had been Barney's idea and his cross to bear when he'd learned how competitive some of them were.

A dark rainy night where nothing much would happen, that was exactly what Dolarhyde had thought until he'd returned with a large pizza box in one hand with a bag of popcorn atop it. He'd let himself in eager to get out of the cold, only to be tacked to the ground by a gigantic African American man; a wall of muscle had simply blind sided him and sent the pizza box sliding across the floor to a man holding a cane.

"Hello, Dolarhyde, been a long time." Marcus bent to flip the box open and steal a slice. "Time to pay your debts." Dolarhyde scrambled to get up but Kett kept him firmly in place while a handful of other goons aimed guns at his head. "You disfigured me for life. You're face is already fucked, but I'm sure I can do a little more damage before you die."

How had Marcus gotten in? How had Marcus even found out where they were? More importantly, where was Reba and the others? No, they'd not have killed her or the other omegas, Marcus valued money above all else and would surely want to sell them rather than killing stock. The betas wouldn't be so fortunate though and possibly already dead. Dolarhyde had no idea how this had happened, but he needed to buy time until Hannibal arrived with Anders. Calling the police wasn't an option, only serial killers could salvage any of this now.

~X~

Hannibal hadn't been keen on game night when Barney had first suggested it mostly because he had a thousand better things to do with his free time. However, Abigail and Will had seemed rather keen on the idea and it was only once a month. That was why, come rain or shine, the children got to stay up late at the House playing boardgames and laughing with everyone else while dogs mingled around the basement with them. Still, it had given him an excuse to prepare a small buffet which was the only real enjoyment he'd gotten out of the whole thing.

Food had been loaded into the Land Rover, the children buckled in and dogs settled before he'd begun the long drive to Wolf Trap. Having mated their daughter and being brought into the family's trust, Anders had slowly been introduced to the House and what had happened; like Dolarhyde, it

had taken quite some time for the residents to warm up to him, but he'd ultimately been accepted due to the faith Abigail had in him. They followed in a car behind the Land Rover.

"Did you make enough food, Hannibal?" Will teased softly. "I'm sure there's twice as much there as usual."

The handsome alpha didn't miss a beat. "We only had a light breakfast, I assumed you'd have built up an apatite. That is unless my cooking no longer appeals."

Will snorted. "Everything you make is amazing and you know it." He looked into the back at his twins who'd been having what looked like a thumb war. "You love Papa's cooking, don't you?"

"Yes!" They announced happily in unison only for Veronique to continue. "The long crispy thing was so good, Papa."

Hannibal gave a little half smile as he drove. "That is called a beef wellington, sweet girl."

The beef hadn't been beef but that didn't need mentioning. Exactly how the topic of cannibalism would be introduced to their twins hadn't been totally worked out but it would need to be introduced. Currently the twins were four, and Lecters or no they'd not understand; they had time to figure out how to phrase it all for them still.

"Papa," began Claude. "Can we play chess again?"

Watching Hannibal explain chess to a three-year-old boy had been a highlight of Will's life, but Claude had truly taken to it unlike his sister. Watching his children and mate play would always warm his heart. In the year that had followed, Claude had become rather delighted by the game and played with anyone he could find.

"Of course, Claude." Hannibal confirmed as he rounded a corner. "Perhaps you could help your sister with the rules again."

If it was an innate instinct in male Lecters to be fiercely protective of their siblings or something Hannibal had subconsciously encouraged in his son, Hannibal couldn't be sure. Claude hardly ever left his sister's side; they were always together and even when Claude seemed distracted by something his maroon eyes would periodically flick to Veronique to check on her. Proud, Hannibal felt proud of his son for that. He'd filed to protect his sister but Claude wouldn't make the same mistake.

Sebastian began to fuss in his car seat when Hannibal's cell phone rang. Will turned to comfort their youngest while Hannibal clicked the hands free with a frown; what on earth could Miriam have wanted?

"Yes, Miriam? Is something the matter?"

They weren't that far away so she'd surely be able to hang on until then, yet, when she spoke, the words were quick and hushed, clearly panicked.

"Doctor Lecter, people are in the House. Josh is dead and they have Mister D." Hannibal's mind stuttered for a second as Will spun back around to face him with wide eyes. "They dragged Miss Bloom down to the basement with the others and -"

Whatever else Miriam had tried to saw found itself abruptly cut off by three loud gunshots that echoed violently through the phone line to startle the children. There was a clattering then the call went dead and Hannibal pulled over forcing Anders to do the same. That clattering, had it been the cellphone falling down the stairwell?

"Hannibal, what the fuck is going on?"

"Don't swear in front of the children."

"Swearing is the least of our concerns right now." Will insisted and, frankly, he was right. "She said Josh is dead. Who would do – Marcus Delamare. This is him, isn't it? He's back and somehow he knows who we are and were we are."

Hannibal didn't move, kept his hands on the wheel despite having stopped and stared out at the rain while windshield wipers brushed heavy drops away. Marcus Delamare was the only logical conclusion they had for where this attack had come from. Marcus had always known where the House was but he should have thought it had no value to him. Could all of this be because of that damn article Alana had been so keen on? There had been a photo outside the House and Marcus had seen his face. Dumb luck, all of this came down to dumb look and Hannibal growing complacent. Complacency killed, it had killed Jack Crawford, it had killed Marcus' empire and now it had come for Hannibal's family.

A fist rapped on the window then causing Hannibal's head to tilt to the side to find Anders and Abigail stood in the rain looking rather confused. With an internal sigh he rolled the window down and explained exactly what was going on.

"And you think the two of us can deal with this? I know we're not your run of the mill civilians, but we're not impervious to bullets. I'll help where I can, of course, but we're outnumbered."

Abigail shook her head uncaring about the rain. "We have an advantage though. We know every inch of the House and that bastard likely doesn't know we're aware he's there."

Hannibal tended to agree. "If I were him, I would attempt to take over quickly and then let my enemies come to me. He thinks he's ambushed us, so let us ambush him. Miriam said Alana was taken to the basement, so I will assume the omegas have been rounded up there. Marcus Delamare is a cruel man, he'll want to torture Francis before killing him so we have a reasonable amount of time."

"Okay, how do we get in without being seen?" Asked Anders as water dripped down his face.

"We use the tunnels."

That had three brows furrow as they scrutinized Hannibal. The House didn't have tunnels, never had or Jack would have used it for transporting the omegas quietly and far more covertly. At the very least Price would have heard tell of them.

"There aren't any tunnels, Hannibal."

That was when Hannibal's knowing smirk pulled itself onto his handsome face. What the hell did Hannibal know that none of the others did? Veronique muttered something about it being cold with the window open, but she went ignored as Hannibal carefully explained his discovery when he'd purchased the property and land from the government. Of course they'd never get the full story on

what exactly the House had originally been used for but, with original blueprints, Hannibal had discovered a simple but forgotten network of tunnels underneath the House. Their original purpose had been lost but Hannibal had seen a new use he'd kept hidden for a rainy day; quite literally it poured.

Anders chuckled. "You want to creepy up on them while they're staring the other way. I like it."

With a basic plan in place and the rain growing heavier, they continued their drive yet, instead off up the new roadway Omega Lives had ordered constructed, Hannibal continued a little further then pulled over into a crop of dark trees where the vehicles wouldn't be easily spotted. Swiftly he was out the Land Rover with Will right behind him and had the trunk open to retrieve the knives he had hidden there as well as Will's gun. Anders stopped behind them to perform a similar act before joining them and Abigail illuminated by the Land Rover's tail lights.

"Abigail, stay with your brothers and sister." Will was quick to say, though it did earn a displeased expression.

"What?! No. I'm coming with you."

"Abigail," began Hannibal in that calming tone of his, the one which made everything sound so damn reasonable. "They are too young to be left alone, especially in the middle of the woods at night. I understand your desire to help your friends, but family must come first and you are a Lecter." He gestured to Anders' Jeep sitting idle behind them "Take Anders' car and drive straight home and wait for us."

All knew that Hannibal Lecter wasn't a man to be argued with but that didn't prevent Abigail trying, her mouth opened to spew protests yet Hannibal's stern expression shut her down with almost comic speed. They'd made a damn good point after all, she couldn't just abandon her three siblings with only the dogs to protect them, and Hannibal hadn't taught her to drive for nothing. She'd not got a full licence yet, but that was by far the least of their problems at that moment. Reluctantly, Abigail took Anders' keys when he proffered them, then helped Will move the twins, Sebastian and both dogs into the Jeep. If they were doing this, they'd do it with the kids as far away as possible.

As soon as the Jeep's tail lights vanished into the darkness and perceived safety, the trio slipped into the depths of the woods uncaring about the rain which steadily soaked them. Hannibal's and Anders' usually perfect hair stuck down to their foreheads while Will's glasses fogged up, puffs of hot air streamed out of their mouths as they hurried only to diffuse off into the night like they'd never been there to begin with. A quiet night of boring boardgames and perfectly prepared canapés – or nibble food as Alana annoying insisted on calling it. Yet, there they were trekking through the muddy woods to take back a building Hannibal had already liberated once.

Finding the tunnel hatch hadn't taken Hannibal all that long, not that Will had expected anything less from his alpha, and with Anders' help it had been loosened so they could descend into the darkness. The air stank foully of dust, the air icy and had Will shivering in seconds – 'should have brought a damn coat' muttered his mind as Hannibal quietly draped his suit jacket over his shoulders. Even in an emergency Hannibal remained the perfectly attentive alpha.

"Thank you." Will cleaned rain off from his glasses as he peered around the narrow tunnel. "Has this really been here the whole time?"

"Indeed it has, brangusis. Alana has not seen this section of the blueprints, I assured I was the only one aware of them. Two tunnels have caved in, but this one runs directly to the House in mostly a

straight line. I believe it was originally intended to run electrical cables."

Yes, the dusty cables half fallen from the west wall suggested exactly that. Didn't matter their original purpose though, there and they that tunnel existed to ambush the ambushers.

"Where does this let out in the House exactly?" Asked Anders as he and Will followed Hannibal.

"There is a crawlspace underneath the library, it lets out into that. There -"

"Hang on! Is that why you insisted we had that square box of a table brought in and tucked in the corner? I thought it was too big and it wasn't exactly your style, but you insisted."

Hannibal cast his clever omega a smile, a genuine one reserved for when he was proud of his family. "That is exactly why. I had the crawlspace hatch uncovered and then placed a cover over the top. A kind of – let us call it a fail safe."

Hannibal Lecter, the inevitably calculating murdered that he was, Will didn't know whether to be delighted they had a safe way inside or angry Hannibal had kept it from him. He could figure all of that out later, protecting his friends and springing Dolarhyde were their primary goals and what he had to keep focused on. Marcus was angry and vengeful, he wanted to get revenge and make a little money while he was at it. Authority had fueled Jack, money had just been an added bonus, Marcus though, money was his incentive for everything. Hannibal and Dolarhyde hadn't just humiliated and torn down his reputation within Maryland, they'd ripped hundreds of thousands of dollars out from under him; Marcus wasn't the sort to let that slide. The omegas were merchandise in his mind, so they'd remain alive and mostly unharmed for the time being. Betas wouldn't be so lucky – Josh had already been killed and probably Miriam as well. There hadn't been mention of Barney or Price, so they'd either found somewhere to hide and think of a plan, or were dead but hadn't been found. That just left Dolarhyde. After the audacity of his betrayal, Marcus would want to draw out his death, would want to torture and torment him until it grew boring. Dolarhyde wasn't any stranger to pain though, he'd be okay as long as they got to him before that boredom set in. Likely it was Hannibal who sat at the top of Marcus' kill list, so the longer Marcus thought he had the upper hand by lying in wait for him, the longer they had to get in and regain control of the situation. This wouldn't be like when Hannibal had murdered Jack, they'd no idea how many underlings Marcus had, where he'd set up his main base or if the cameras were being watched. If Barney had received any warning of the attack, he'd surely have sent the cameras dark to avoid them being used against them, but that relied on a lot of ifs.

The dark tunnel seemed to stretch on forever, as though some supernatural power kept them permanently in the middle of it. Who knew how many guns were wandering the House, yet Hannibal and Anders seemed happy enough to literally cut through them with blades alone. Will could see his mate's back through his wet shirt; Hannibal might have been deceptively strong and Anders filled with a youthful vigor, but neither were superheroes. Then there was Will, sure he'd grown healthy in the years he'd been with his mate and had a little more muscle than omegas traditionally did, but he couldn't fight like them. Blue eyes glanced down to his firearm, he wasn't awful with a gun but he certainly could have been better.

"We're here," announced Hannibal when they finally reached the end of the cold tunnel. All three of them looked up knowing, as soon as they opened the hatch, a hollow square table would be the only cover they had. "Anders and I will go first, Will will go last."

Will's brow furrowed deeply. "Just because I'm the omega."

Maroon eyes fixed on Will in a strange mix of stern and loving. "No, because you are the one with the gun. Anders and I can attack silently and we must remain silent for as long as possible. These people are not the complacent betas Jack Crawford had guarding the House, they are all armed and know how to fight back. Eliminating as many as possible as quickly and quietly as possible must be our focus, Will."

"He's right," Anders agreed and, begrudgingly, Will did as well. "Where are we moving to though? Surely there has to be somewhere we need to control."

How these two men sounded so miliary minded when neither had ever had a day of training let alone active service, Will didn't know. What Will did know was the areas they needed to take back.

"The House has three floors and a basement." Will stated; he'd become eerily familiar with every inch of the House – at least he'd thought he had until Hannibal had sprung a tunnel on him. "The place is a concrete brick and, inspectors said we needed fire exits so we did, then we installed pin locks on them. Marcus' people won't know what they are and can't get through those re-enforced doors without an explosive. If we can get D back and any betas still alive, we can take the basement where the omegas are being kept and the first floor. It doesn't matter about the second and third floors, as long as we have the foundation of the building, we have the advantage."

This was Will's design. The basement wouldn't just ensure the safety of his friends but also that they controlled the electrical systems, cameras and the medical area Hannibal had constructed out of Able Gideon's old one. The first floor would mean the tunnel and external doors not protected by a pin weren't accessible to them, as well as that little gun nut's delight Dolarhyde had built in the room he'd commandeered as an office. If they trapped Marcus and his goons on the upper two floors there wouldn't be any escape and everything would turn into a waiting game. Although, that was all far easier said than done.

"All right," nodded Anders. "Then we make for the basement first and hope we figure out where Mister D is."

That could sound as confident as they liked, but that didn't change the fact their plan was full of holes and a single mistake could spell death for all of them. Maybe optimism would do them some good; raise morale if nothing else.

With a roll of his strong shoulders, Hannibal popped the hatch and clambered up into the dark space created by the table. He listened intently for several intense moments before gesturing for the others to follow. Anders slipped up first followed, less smoothly, by Will after Hannibal had shuffled off toward the mezzanine after having removed his shoes. Hunter stalked toward his prey with the focused eyes of an irascible tiger leaving the omega and younger alpha to simply watch from their hiding space. The prey's first mistake had been to light a cigarette as the pungent scent masked Hannibal's long enough for him to creep up – No. No, that wasn't right. The first mistake had been making an enemy of the Chesapeake Ripper in the first place. So, by the time he realized a blood-hungry alpha loomed ever closer, it was far too late. With swift strikes Hannibal punctured both lungs before he dropped the blade low to sever the femoral artery. Careful, precise, disturbingly quick and full of medical knowledgable, that was how the goon died. When he dropped Hannibal caught him and lowered him against a wall where he'd be harder to spot. In a strange way, Hannibal felt a sense of déjà vu as he descended the ladder and nodded to his cohorts to join him; the last time he'd infiltrated the House he'd started his killing in the library.

"Hang on a moment."

With that Anders hurried up the ladder to retrieve the dead man's weapon; like Hannibal he preferred knives when possible, but having a gun on hand seemed like a sensible course of action.

Ever so quietly the three cracked the library door open so maroon eyes could peek out at the reception area. That was the moment they realized their plan might not have been as far from fruition as they'd thought. Instead of a hefty number of mercenaries, lackeys. whatever one wished to call them, they instead found two men left to guard the front door; maybe Marcus hadn't retained as much money and power after the Madison-May as they'd assumed. Was it possible that, like Jack before him, Marcus had tricked himself into thinking he couldn't fail? Surely that lesson should have been learned when Dolarhyde had turned him into a cripple; even back then Hannibal had seen enough to know that wound would leave a limp. They all knew the old tale of looking gift horses in their mouths, so they'd take what they could get.

Knowing drawing one or both of the guards to them was their best option to remain undetected longer, Will went to the stereo kept on a shelf by the mezzanine ladder and turned it on before ducking behind one of the comfy chairs Alana had insisted were brought in. Someone, probably Rex, had left it on some crappy techno station – he had terrible taste in music if one asked Will or Hannibal – and the repetitive beat didn't take long to reach the two guards out at the reception desk.

"Turn that fucking shit off, Calvin!" The closer of the men growled while Hannibal and Anders waited silently on either side of the door. Of course, the sound persisted. "I said turn it off. Marcus hears that shit he's going to have Kett rip us a new one."

When the stereo still didn't shut off the two men decided to do it themselves and stormed into the dark library only to be grabbed and slashed by serial killers. Their deaths weren't important or memorable to them, just another step closer to their goal. Will finally shut off the music then pushed aside the table covering the hatch so his co-conspirators could dump the latest bodies down into the tunnel out of sight; the one from the mezzanine soon joined them, but not before Hannibal pilfered his radio.

"These men are better armed and some are alphas, but they're not very well trained."

"Anders is right." Hannibal agreed, accented voice quiet and soothing. "I suspect Francis killed his best at the Madison-May theatre and probably a lot of his reputation along with it. The best men he has will likely be focused on controlling Francis and protecting Marcus himself."

Will thought for a moment, mentally combed through everything his mate and Dolarhyde had told him about Marcus Delamare and how the three they'd just killed had acted. Then, in a calm tone, he began to speak from the mind of a savage.

"I'm angry. Someone I never saw coming and a man I thought I owned came into my kingdom and ripped it apart without me even realizing. I lost money, I lost my reputation and my pride. So I'm not just angry, I'm livid. I can't escape that night, my injury follows me around reminding me of it. That only makes me more angry." The alphas watched quietly knowing Will's insight wasn't often wrong. "I had backups and money stashed, I can and have been rebuilding but my clients don't trust me anymore. They think they're better than me. I want revenge and I want my business back the way it was, I want to live in the fashion I'm accustom to. My money and my power. Then I discover where my enemies are somehow, I can't resist. I could send some assassin or blow the building up, but I want to turn the tables to prove I'm better. They crept into my kingdom so I'll do the same. They won't see me coming and I won't make their mistake. I got away, they won't. Dolarhyde is the one who disfigured me like a dog biting its owner. I'll teach him a slow and agonizing lesson. I'll

reassert my dominance, doesn't matter that people don't want to work for me after my last employees all got murdered then burnt to a crisp, I'm the one in control again. All I have to do is wait, just wait for Hannibal Lecter to show up, to walk in unaware he's been usurped. This is my design."

Hannibal hadn't thought of it like that, that properly trained and efficient enforcers wouldn't want to work for a man knowing his last lot had been slaughtered and set on fire. It worked in their favor though, meant they'd be dealing with arrogant idiots who thought brute strength and a gun would lead them to victory every time. It proved true. The trio steadily and quietly managed to clear a path to the basement with bodies all being dumped in the tunnels. Anders and Hannibal might have been drenched in rain water and blood by the time they made it to the basement stairs, but they'd not actually encountered that many people. A skeleton crew Anders had likened it to, a crude yet apt description. Radio chatter had been down to a minimum as well proving there weren't many of them and, though tough to beat when in a group, were surprisingly easy to overpower individually.

Unlike the square upper floors of the House, its basement formed more of a T shape with the stairs spitting people out into a space with only two options; left or right. Left led to Hannibal's little medical office and the mechanical room, while right was storage, the camera room and the media area Barney had set up for the omegas to enjoy. What should have been a relaxing place of leisure had likely been become a holding cell. Before Miriam's call had ended, she'd said Alana had been taken to the basement, that coupled with the fact boardgame night took place in the basement suggested exactly where the omegas had been held. Carefully they peeked around the corners to check for guards and the small lights on the cameras. So far they'd all seemed dead, but neither alpha wanted to get cocky.

Left to where Dolarhyde might have been or right to where their friends had been imprisoned, that was the question. Whether one would be less dangerous or give them an upper hand. Dolarhyde's office was back on the first floor, he'd got a pin lock preventing Hannibal letting simply letting himself in on the fly, guns would likely be useful as would an extra person. Meanwhile, the omegas weren't in any immediate danger, Marcus wanting them alive hadn't been hard to figure out. Left, they'd go left and hopefully Marcus hadn't been able to resist using Hannibal's medical tools to torture the Tooth Fairy.

Chapter 11

Dolarhyde fought to keep the screams of agony in as Marcus stabbed another of Hannibal's scalpels into his calf. Part of him wanted to laugh at the surgical light which had been used to illuminate an otherwise dark room, it was far too much like some bad action flick. Marcus had gone so out of his way to play unwavering gangster that it ended up looking ridiculous and littered with bad actors. Meanwhile, the other half – sounded annoyingly like the Dragon – chastised him angrily for letting his guard down, for letting Marcus get the drop on him. The omegas at the House had only just come to fully trust him, Reba had been doing well and Hannibal had been proud of him. Now he'd die strapped to a table brightened by a single surgical light like in a b-movie. Francis Dolarhyde, the Great Red Dragon, would die pathetically.

"… don't bite the hand that feeds you, Dolarhyde." Marcus growled as a scalpel was pushed deeper. "What's so good about this foreign fucker anyway? You just have a hard-on for the accent?" Dolarhyde didn't respond, just focused on keeping the pain inside and scrambling for a way out. Marcus turned to Cordell. "You almost ready? I want to see if a dragon really lurks underneath."

Cordell didn't seem bothered by Marcus' giggles or his insistence on speed, just carried on readying his equipment – and some of the nicer stuff he'd pilfered from Hannibal's House supply. The idea had come from a piece Freddie Lounds had written about the Flag Killer, about how long it took and how much patience went into flaying a person. Marcus wanted Dolarhyde to suffer while Cordell like the idea of trying it out for himself, so go in search of the Red Dragon underneath they would.

"I'm almost done. Take his shirt off, we'll start with the torso."

Two of Marcus' newest lackeys wasted no time dragging a knife down his shirt sending buttons skidding across the floor, then ripped it away leaving Dolarhyde's toned chest on display to them.

Marcus chuckled. "Maybe you envied the omegas, is that it? You get so worked up for that fucking bastard and his accent that you wanna be his omega? Oh, I bet that's it. Look at that, you really are nothing but a fucking pussy. Just dripping for daddy." Marcus leaned in closer with a dark smirk. "Does he make you call him daddy?"

Two things happened then, two things in perfect unison. The first was that Dolarhyde's lovely blue eyes caught sight of movement at the door, only to realize he knew that face extremely well: Hannibal Lecter. The second was Cordell dropping something behind him at the counter which had all eyes turn to him. If Dolarhyde could keep them distracted, focused on him, just for a moment, Hannibal could strike. He and Reba might not have planned on joining in with game night, but the Lecters had, and that meant three serial killers and a dark minded omega were in the building.

"He's papa, not daddy, and only his kids call him that. Most people know him by a different name."

Dolarhyde did his best to taunt the crippled man, to have his voice drip with amusement and ridicule, enough to goad Marcus into focusing entirely on him.

"And what might that be, you pathetic piece of shit?"

"… The Chesapeake Ripper." Marcus' brow furrowed in disbelief a moment so Dolarhyde made a show of laughing to put the two goons on edge. "You think some normal rich alpha would have

killed all your guys out the goodness of his heart? You're surrounded by serial killers, we're sharks swimming around your head. He won't just kill you, he'll *eat* you. Murder family is what they call it." Marcus tried to keep the fear off his face but he couldn't; he'd always known there was something wrong with Hannibal Lecter even before he'd had a name to put with the face. Being the Chesapeake Ripper disturbingly answered far too many questions. "You're screwed. He's the Ripper and his son-in-law is the damn Flag Killer."

Dolarhyde had done it, he'd firmly gotten everybody's attention fixated on him. In a dark, fairly small room it was easy for the doors to be thrown open only for Will and Anders to gun both lackeys down in an instant. Cordell spun around with scalpel in hand, but only Hannibal was good enough to survive bringing a knife to a gunfight. In one smooth motion, Hannibal raised the glock he'd taken from another of the dead to shoot Cordell dead.

"Hello again, Mister Delamare." Hannibal greeted as Will cut Dolarhyde loose and Anders made to watch the hallway; upstairs likely hadn't heard the shots but they couldn't be sure the same was true for the rest of the basement. Concrete walls dampened sound nicely, but complacency killed as they all knew. "It is rude to show up unannounced." He turned to Dolarhyde and crouched to look at the scalpel wounds on his leg. "These are not too deep – look worse than they are. You will be fine, Francis. Anders, please tend to his wounds. Will, watch the door."

Marcus didn't know what to do; his people were dead, Kett was upstairs and now he stood in a room with three alarmingly proficient serial killers. How had they gotten back in without his men seeing them? No, it wasn't that his men hadn't seen them, it was that his men were dead. The Lithuanian fucker had done it again! Had killed just about everyone around him while Marcus had let himself be distracted; there wouldn't be escape this time though. A hard thing it was to realize he'd been outmatched in every way imaginable. Weak; he was weak and little more than a useless mouse facing down a pack of wolves. Marcus might have been an alpha, but he'd never formed a pack, never created any bonds. His goons worked for him and nothing more, their loyalty had been purchased rather than earned through respect and strength as Hannibal's so clearly had. Marcus hated it, hated every fibre of it. He was meant to be the powerful one who lorded over the place while others coward.

"Please refrain from spewing whatever smart comment you've come up with." Hannibal sighed, he hadn't really got the energy to keep his mask on. "There will be time for that later when Anders flays you alive and I cut you into chunks to feed my mate's dogs. For now, all I want to know is how many other intruders there are in my building and how well armed."

"Fuck off, Lugan! Acting all high and mighty. Kett's gonna fucking kill you."

Hannibal raised the gun to silence Marcus before the tirade continued rather than because his childish attempts at insults had gotten to him. Having the same weapon which had just blown Cordell's brains across the wall aimed at him did a wonderful job of shutting Marcus up. A rabbit dressed as a wolf, that was all.

"I recommend you answer my questions simply, it will determine whether or not I let the Red Dragon amuse himself with you first."

Hannibal normally preferred to keep himself above the level of tossing threats about. However, the calibre of his foe wasn't that high and all he understood were threats. Frankly, Marcus' bar was so low, Hannibal would likely need to dig it up.

"I can tell you where they'll all be." Maroon eyes flicked to Dolarhyde a moment. "He always does the same thing. He's down here trying to prove he's powerful and evil while whoever replaced me will be upstairs making arrangements to have the omegas picked up. When I got blidesided there were at least twenty of them, doubt Marcus brought more than that. I've got no idea where the betas are or if they're alive, but Barney was in the media room when I left and Miriam was upstairs."

They already knew Miriam and Josh were surely dead but the same couldn't be said for Barney. Price had gotten lucky, that was for damn sure, he'd gone out for dinner with Brian that evening and would probably end up taking Brian back to his small apartment.

Their original plan had been to take control of the basement and first floor and that hadn't changed. Depending on who exactly had been hired by Marcus would decide if using him as a hostage to get what they wanted was a valid option or not. Before all that though, they had to take back the omegas and Barney along with them. With Dolarhyde's wounds tended to, Marcus was swiftly incapacitated and handcuffed to the metal table by either wrist for later. Then they steadily made their way to the media room to find the gunshots had been heard, for a while they'd been played off as imagination or part of Marcus' torture of Dolarhyde, but when an angry Red Dragon appeared having gathered weapons from his office, all hell broke loose. The air turn into metal as Dolarhyde and Will murdered their enemies, the scent of irony blood filled the air and left no room for doubt over who controlled the House.

Meanwhile, Hannibal branched off for the upper floors with Anders much as he had with Price once upon a time. Miriam hadn't lied, Josh lay dead on the floor in a pool of his own crimson while Miriam did the same in the stairwell above him.

Hannibal found it ironic that Marcus Delamare had loomed over their quiet lives for so long and yet it was ultimately Dolarhyde's replacement who posed the most threat. Sneaking up on them wasn't an option, not after the bloodbath that had begun in the basement. The time for plans and stealth had passed revealing the time of intuition and natural skill. They might have had the weapons and numbers, but Hannibal knew every inch of the House while Anders was a wily little devil with a boatload of luck on his side. That luck kept a bullet from hitting anywhere too vital, but he'd soon been shot in the arm and been smashed in the head with the butt of a Ruger, which had caused blood to stain half his face.

Insanity. Even Hannibal had to admit what they were doing was insanity, one wrong move and they'd all be dead. Surely two people couldn't take down the mass of entrenched enemies alone even if they were cunning serial killers. Yet, just when Hannibal had started to think about a retreat, about boxing them in upstairs and using his hostage idea instead of continuing to clean them out, a small cylinder hurtled passed him and a voice screamed out for them to shut their eyes. A flashbang? Only one person in the House would have had such a thing and, sure enough, Dolarhyde appeared at the end of the hall right after the bang to do what he did best; kill people in rapid succession in a confined space. Sensing his chance, Hannibal launched over to Anders and hauled him away to the stairwell where he found Will.

"Shit, Hannibal! Is he okay?"

"He'll live, Brangusis." Anders found himself rested against the railing. "Keep pressure on his side, that is the worse wound. I take it the omegas are safe?"

"Yeah," nodded Will. "Barney's been shot in the shoulder but he's okay. He's back on the cameras now. He's telling D where they all are." A clairvoyant eye wasn't something they'd refuse. "Alana

and Beverly are trying to calm the others down."

Anders offered his weapon to Hannibal. "You'll need this, you're running out of ammo. I'll be fine."

With a nod and a kiss to Will's lips, Hannibal went back to help Dolarhyde exterminate their infestation. He might have preferred a blade, but a gun would be more efficient given the situation and Hannibal did love efficiency.

Metal tore through his side which caused an angry man with dark-skin to chuckle; Kett, had to be. They couldn't allow this to go on much longer; they'd lost too much blood, they'd burned through almost all of their energy and were down to a pittance of ammunition. Yet, amazingly, one more push did it. The two serial killers ended up stood in the second floor hallway practically holding each other up as corpses surrounded them. Lungs sucked in desperate air uncaring that it tasted of metal, uncaring that their ribs screamed at them. They'd won. They'd won while Marcus had failed.

Over the next few hours several things happened: Price had been contacted and ordered to transport the omegas to Hannibal's house on the cliffs while everything was cleaned up. Hannibal and Anders had treated each others wounds before tending to those of everyone else and Barney had wiped the camera footage. He'd always prided himself on being a good person who cared about others, but he'd helped Hannibal slaughter a building full of people twice now. A proper clean up would have to wait until they'd gotten their strength back. Nobody was in good enough shape to go hosing down walls or digging graves, so bodies were just awkwardly dragged to the tunnel hatch and dropped in to be dealt with later. Then there was Marcus Delamare himself, he'd been tossed into the back of the Land Rover and transported to Hannibal's home where he'd been imprisoned in the basement.

Clean up would take a long time, Marcus needed to be dispatched in the most savage way possible, death would be slow, agonizing and vindictive. A death at the hands of serial killers and a vengeful omega who'd carried a blackened soul since long before he'd mated. There'd be no FBI involvement, no article written by Freddie Lounds or any other journalist, Marcus would simply rue the day he'd been born until Azrael finally took pity on him, and then he'd fade into nothingness much as Jack had. They'd hunted him and his lackeys as a pack and now they'd rip him apart. Rest needed to come before all of that though. Rest for their bruised and battered bodies. That was how Hannibal, Will, Anders and even Dolarhyde had found themselves collapsed in the living room of Hannibal's home in various states of consciousness while two dogs wandered around them with concerned.

Abigail entered then with the twins trailing behind her and Sebastian in her arms. She'd known keeping them away from the wounded bodies of their fathers had probably been a better idea, but the twins had refused to do anything without seeing Daddy and Papa first.

"Everything is okay now, little ones." Will comforted when the twins clambered onto the couch between them and almost growled at Abigail to hand Sebastian over. "Hush, we're all fine."

Hannibal used what little strength he had left to pull his mate and children closer while Abigail rushed to Anders and Dolarhyde drifted off into an exhausted sleep. Anders had said it best, they were a pack; a deadly pack of serial killers and dark omegas. Veronique's squeezed his hand with her little one then and Hannibal saw maroon eyes peering up at him. He'd not been able to save Mischa, but he had protected his family this time, and he'd do it a-damn-gain if he had to.

THE END.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!